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- Inside CNN

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How to read a newspaper

by **Walter Cronkite**

International Paper asked Walter Cronkite, for years television's foremost news anchorman, and an ardent advocate of the need for a free people to remain free by keeping fully informed, to tell you how your newspaper can help you cope better with your world each day.

If you're like most Americans, you try to keep up with the news by watching it on television.

That's how 65% of us get 100% of our news—from the 24-odd-minute TV news broadcast each evening.

The problem—and I know the frustration of it firsthand—is that unless something really special happens, we in TV news have to put severe time limitations on every story, even the most complicated and important ones.

Get more than headlines

So what we bring you is primarily a front-page headline service. To get all you need to know, you have to flesh out those headlines with a complete account of the news from a well-edited and thorough newspaper.

Is it really necessary to get the whole story? Dorothy Greene Friendly put it this way: "What the American people don't know can kill them." Amen.

News people have a responsibility. And so do you. *Ours* is to report the news fairly, accurately, completely. *Yours* is to keep yourself informed every day.

I'll never forget the quotation hanging in Edward R. Murrow's CBS office. It was from Thoreau: "It takes two to speak the truth—one to speak and one to hear."

Take a 3-minute overview

Here's how I tackle a paper. For starters, I take a three-minute over-



view of the news. No need to go to the sports section first, or the TV listings. With my overview you'll get there quickly enough. First I scan the front-page headlines, look at the pictures and read the captions. I do the same thing page by page front to back. Only then do I go back for the whole feast.

The way the front page is "made up" tells you plenty. For one thing, headline type size will tell you how the paper's editor ranks the stories on relative importance. A major crop failure in Russia should get larger type than an overturned truckload of wheat on the Interstate, for example.

Which is the main story?

You'll find the main or lead story in the farthest upper right-hand column. Why? Tradition. Newspapers used to appear on newsstands folded and displayed with their top right-hand quarter showing. They made up the front page with the lead story there to entice readers.

You'll find the second most important story at the top far

left, unless it's related to the lead story. Do you have to read *all* the stories in the paper? Gosh, no. But you should *check* them all. Maybe the one that appears at first to be the least appealing will be the one that will most affect your life.

News is information, period

A good newspaper provides four basic ingredients to help you wrap your mind around the news: information, background, analysis and interpretation.

Rule #1 of American journalism is: "News columns are reserved only for news."

What is news? It is information only. You can tell a good newspaper story. It just reports the news. It doesn't try to slant it. And it gives you *both* sides of the story.

Look out for a lot of adjectives and adverbs. They don't belong in an objective news story. They tend to color and slant it so you may come to a wrong conclusion.

Do look for by-lines, datelines and the news service sources of articles. These will also help you judge a story's importance and its facts.

As you read a story you can weigh its truthfulness by asking yourself, "Who said so?" Look out for "facts" that come from unnamed sources, such as "a highly placed government official." This could tip you off that the story is not quite true, or that someone—usually in Washington—is sending up a "trial balloon" to see if something that may happen or be proposed gets a good reception.

Another tip: Check for "Corrections" items. A good newspaper will straighten out false or wrong information as soon as it discovers

its error. A less conscientious one will let it slide or bury it.

An upside-down pyramid

Reporters write news stories in a special way called the "inverted pyramid" style. That means they start with the end, the *climax* of the story, with the most important facts first, then build in more details in order of importance. This is unlike the telling or writing of most stories, where you usually start at the beginning and save the climax for last. Knowing about the newspaper's "inverted pyramid" style will help you sift facts.

A well-reported story will tell you "who," "what," "when," "where" and "how." The best newspapers will go on to tell you "why." "Why" is often missing. And that may be the key ingredient.

Many important stories are flanked by "sidebars." These are supporting stories that offer, not news, but the "why"—*background* and *analysis*—to help you understand and evaluate it.

Background offers helpful facts. *Analysis* frequently includes opinion. So it should be—and usually is—carefully labeled as such. It's generally by-lined by an expert on the subject who explains the causes

of the news and its possible consequences to you.

No good newspaper will mix interpretation with "hard" news, either. Interpretation goes beyond analysis and tells you not just what will probably happen, but what



"TV news coverage, as good as it is, has some limitations. Time slips by quickly. It restricts the length of each story and the number of stories we can cover. A good newspaper can carry more stories and give you considerably more detail."

ought to happen. This should be clearly labeled, or at best, reserved for the editorial page or "op-ed" (opposite the editorial) page.

Form your own opinion first

I form my own opinion *before* I turn to the editorial page for the pundits' views. I don't want them to tell me how to think until I've wrestled the issue through to my own conclusion. Once I have, I'm open to other reasoning. Resist the temptation to let them do your thinking for you.

Here's an idea I firmly believe in and act on. When you read something that motivates you, do something about it. Learn more about it. Join a cause. Write a letter. You can *constantly* vote on

issues by writing letters, particularly to your Congressman or state or local representative.

To understand the news better you can also read news magazines. Books help fill in the holes, too. During the Vietnam war, for example, many people felt that the daily news coverage wasn't entirely satisfactory. The truth is, you could have gotten many important new facts on the war from the books coming out at the time.

Pick a TV story and follow it

Now that I've told you about the basics of getting under the skin of a newspaper, let newspapers get under your skin.

Tonight, pick an important story that interests you on the TV news. Dig into the story—in your newspaper. Follow it, and *continue* to follow it closely in print. See if you don't find yourself with far more understanding of the event.

And see if you don't have a far more sensible opinion as to the "whys" and "wherefores" of that event, even down to how it will affect you—and maybe even what should be done about it.

Keep up with the news the way my colleagues and I do—on TV and in the newspapers.

Learn to sift it for yourself, to heft it, to value it, to question it, to ask for it all. You'll be in better control of your life and your fortunes.

And that's the way it is.



"These are the kinds of stories you can find on the front page: 1: biggest story; 2: second biggest story; 3: background; 4: sidebar. Also: analysis and interpretation. What's it all about? Let's look into it here."

Today, the printed word is more vital than ever. Now there is more need than ever for all of us to *read* better, *write* better and *communicate* better.

International Paper offers this series in the hope that, even in a small way, we can help.

If you'd like to share this article with others—students, employees, friends—we'll gladly send you reprints. So far we've sent out over 23,000,000 reprints in response to requests from people everywhere. Write: How to read a newspaper, "Power of the Printed Word," International Paper Company, Dept. 15CJ, P.O. Box 954, Madison Square Station, New York, NY 10010. © 1985 INTERNATIONAL PAPER COMPANY



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THE SECOND ANNUAL FIRST AMENDMENT JOURNALISM AWARD

To honor outstanding media coverage of First Amendment issues, particularly church-state separation and freedom of expression.

CATEGORIES: Newspaper, magazine, broadcast (radio, television) and editorial cartoons.

ELIGIBILITY: Entries must have been published or broadcast in the United States for the first time in 1985. Entries and entry forms must be received no later than March 14, 1986.

AWARDS: A \$1000 first place prize will be awarded in each category. Judges may make a special award for local First Amendment coverage done with limited resources.

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ABC News Viewpoint/Ted Koppel
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RADIO

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WRVO, Oswego, NY
"Religion and Politics: The Conservative Connection"

NEWSPAPERS

NEWSDAY
"Secrecy Series"

TIMES-NEWS, Twin Falls, Idaho
Aryan Nations Coverage

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MAGAZINES

THE NEW REPUBLIC
"America's Holy War"

THE PROGRESSIVE

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THE NATION

"Round Two for Judge Bork"

EDITORIALS

THE JOURNAL GAZETTE, Ft. Wayne, IN

"Freedom of Religion"

TIMES-NEWS, Twin Falls, ID

Editorials by Stephen Hartgen

THE BAY CITY TIMES, Bay City, MI

"Washington Doesn't Care About Johnny—Only Votes"

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Herbert Block

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KANSAS CITY TIMES

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The program is sponsored by People for the American Way, a national nonpartisan First Amendment citizens group that protects and promotes constitutional liberties.



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● To assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths, and to help define — or redefine — standards of honest, responsible service . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent ●

Excerpt from the *Review's* founding editorial, Autumn 1961

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STORMY WEATHER AHEAD FOR THE AUTOMATED OFFICE

In 1945, the U.S. Navy was putting the first digital computer through its paces. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the room-sized machine broke down. After a long search, technicians discovered the cause. Deep within the machine, crushed between the points of a relay, was a moth.

"Bugs" have bedeviled Computer Man ever since.

Until recently, things were getting better every year. Each new generation of business machines has proved more reliable than the last.

Yet, for all this progress, the business that trusts its affairs to computers may

continued on next page

—continued from preceding page—

be more at risk today than at any time in the last 40 years.

The rise of office-wide and company-wide systems is changing the arithmetic of risk. The number and variety of devices now being installed multiply the chances that, on any given day, *something* will fail.

More disturbing: *business machines no longer fail alone.*

The "why" of this will be familiar if you ever struggled with those old-fashioned Christmas lights: one bad bulb and the whole string went dark. In an office system, each "bulb" is likely to be a \$10,000 business machine. And the "string," a maze of cables and

fiber optics stretching (literally) all over the map.

What's to be done? Must whole companies now be hostage to the performance of machines? Below, AT&T digs into the issues and finds reason for optimism—as well as alarm.



BLOOD. Any company whose life's blood pumps through a computer is going to want some sort of backup. A count of America's business machines would turn up thousands of devices whose sole job is to sit and wait.

All this duplication does as much to enrich hardware vendors as it does to protect system users.

By contrast, the gospel according

to AT&T is "*communication, not duplication!*" In AT&T's world, information is portable. Our stock in trade are networks that can be instantly re-configured to shift the burden of a downed computer to another device whose day-to-day chores are less immediate.

Like cast members in a Broadway show, the devices in such a system are capable of stepping into each other's roles at a moment's notice.

By no coincidence at all, the same AT&T networks that permit you to work around a problem can *prevent* most problems in the first place.

Remote sensing devices can now monitor the health of entire office systems around the clock from AT&T command posts miles away.

So sensitive are these probes that they can spotlight malfunctions in the making within individual machines—usually before the users themselves are aware of anything wrong.

These same probes also serve as *tools*. In AT&T's world, some 40% to 50% of all repairs can be made without a service call. Those are "real world" figures: AT&T now stands watch over 35,000 systems.



HITCH. The hitch in all this is that few companies live in an all-AT&T world. Few live in an all-*anything* world. More and more of today's office systems rest on a fragile ecology of devices from *many* vendors.

Vendor A may know his own stuff inside out. Ditto for Vendor B. But when your system depends on a whole alphabet of vendors, who do you call? Who's accountable?

That was precisely the question a

*For all this progress,
the business that trusts its
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“

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his own stuff inside out. Ditto
for Vendor B. But when your system
depends on a whole alphabet of
vendors, who do you call?
Who's accountable?*

”

major electronics firm put to AT&T last winter. This company had built up data and communications networks using lines and equipment from 7 vendors, including some of AT&T's chief rivals.

What the company wanted was one vendor that would stand accountable for the workings of every line and every switch they owned in 48 states.

Would AT&T take the job?

As a service company, we're moving in that direction, but there are limits to what any company can promise where others' products are involved. We are judged by the promises we *keep*.

AT&T's proposal: a trial marriage. We'd start small, get it right, and

expand from there. In this case, "starting small" meant across-the-board responsibility for systems at 50 sites in 16 states.

Today, as far as the electronics firm is concerned, it is AT&T's job to watchdog the performance of all these systems. When trouble knocks, it is now AT&T's job to pinpoint the fault, and to orchestrate the efforts of other vendors to put things right.

One AT&T-er sums up the complex logistics this way: "When a customer has one number to call — no matter when, no matter what — you'd better be ready to jump."

Free Offer: How does AT&T (or any vendor) work in harness with a com-

petitor? A recent AT&T/Hewlett-Packard white paper offers an inside look at the issues, the pitfalls, and the keys to success. For a free copy, please telephone 1 800 247-1212. Or you may write Mr. Dale Hegstrom, AT&T Information Systems, P.O. Box 1405, Morristown, NJ 07960-1405.

◇

JEANS. AT&T now serves 7 million business customers. Some wear pinstripes, some wear jeans. They are a cross section of American business.

The biggest have more computers and communications gear than many governments.

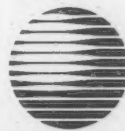
It is these big companies who feel most keenly the lack of integrated service and support. They expect us to lead the charge to fill this void.

They see it as part of our job.

Meanwhile, we have customers who have yet to buy their first PCs. For them, we are a telephone, an Operator's voice, and someone to call "in case." (AT&T service technicians aren't drawn from a hat. Like neighborhood cops, each one patrols a particular business beat.)

Small or large, no two of our customers are exactly the same.

Our job is to be there. No matter who calls. No matter when. No matter what. We're AT&T.



AT&T

The right choice.

CHRONICLE

The White House press takes a stand

Restricting reporters' access to the president has been a hallmark of the Reagan administration's press relations — and the large, often fractious, White House press corps has managed to do little, if anything, to combat it. Late last September, however, in a show of unity, the members of the White House television pool — CBS, NBC, ABC, and CNN — took a stand.

The occasion was Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's first meeting with President Reagan at the White House. At the regular 9:15 morning press briefing at which White House spokesman Larry Speakes announces the day's ground rules for coverage of the president, television correspondents were dismayed to learn that, after a brief session with Reagan and Shevardnadze in the Oval Office, they would be barred from observing the two men as they strolled along the colonnade by the Rose Garden after their morning meeting. Still photographers and

one network pool camera would be allowed — but no network reporters.

The restriction put the networks in a quandary. When former Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko visited the White House in September 1984, his walk with Reagan along the colonnade had been the visual high point of that evening's network coverage. Each of the networks wanted that same shot of Reagan and Shevardnadze. But should they accept the ban on reporters? "People might wonder, what's the big deal?" says NBC White House correspondent Chris Wallace. "Why not just shoot the pictures? But we see [President Reagan] so seldom, and under such managed conditions, that if we gave up the only leverage we have — our cameras — it would be an even more managed presidency than it already is. So we say, 'You want our cameras, fine, but you've got to take us [reporters] with them.'"

In the past, such ultimatums have been less

than effective. In April 1982, for example, White House deputy chief of staff Michael Deaver threatened to bar reporters from photo sessions in the Oval Office if they did not stop questioning the president. NBC, CBS, and ABC (CNN was not yet a member of the pool) responded by threatening to withdraw both reporters and cameras. The White House refused to back down, and ABC and CBS made good on their threat. But when NBC decided not to join the boycott, the other networks sent their cameras back in.

This time, however, the Washington bureau chiefs of the four networks conferred and decided to hold their ground. After the morning briefing announcing the restriction, William Headline, CNN's bureau chief and that month's pool chairman, called chief White House spokesman Larry Speakes to protest. A few hours and three phone calls later, Headline had still not gotten through to Speakes, although he was told that the spokesman had received his messages and understood the problem. "By then we were getting close to the event, and we were all upset that we hadn't been given the chance for a dialogue with the president's press secretary," recalls Headline. "We concluded we had to do something to communicate our frustration about both the restriction and his failure to call us back, so we decided that we would decline the opportunity to cover the event."

At 11:50 A.M., minutes before the colonnade walk, Headline made one last attempt to appeal to Speakes. Told that he could not take the call, Headline left the message that the bureau chiefs still hoped to discuss the restriction, but, if that was impossible, Speakes should know they wouldn't be participating. A mere thirty seconds later, according to Headline, Speakes called him back, "saying he didn't care if we didn't want that shot and that the White House reserved the right to order photo-only pools." (Speakes has declined to return several phone calls requesting his side of the story.)

By the time Speakes and Headline had completed their conversation, however, White House aides had already escorted ABC's Charles Warner, the day's pool cameraman, to his shooting position, and the se-

White House strictures on coverage of this presidential stroll with Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze made the networks fighting mad.



J. L. Allan/Sygma

HOW LESS LEAD IN GASOLINE WILL AFFECT YOUR CAR

USE OF ALCOHOL-GASOLINE BLENDS REQUIRES YOUR CAREFUL SELECTION

The Environmental Protection Agency is reducing the amount of lead allowed in leaded gasoline by more than 90%. General Motors supports this effort to reduce lead in the atmosphere. But our customers need to know how this action may affect their vehicles.

In simple terms, continue with the same gasoline you've been using. You probably won't notice any difference at your service station. Just be sure your gasoline meets the requirements below.

For post-1974 model cars and light trucks (less than 6,000 lbs.). Continue to use *unleaded* gasoline only. The new lower-lead limits for leaded gasoline *are still too high*: lead in gasoline will harm the emission-control system.

For 1971-74 model cars and light trucks. Use either unleaded or the new lower-lead gasoline. These vehicles were designed to run on either one.

For all pre-1971 model cars and trucks. Use the new lower-lead gasolines. These vehicles need leaded gas to lubricate exhaust valves. The lead raises octane ratings and helps to avoid "knocking" and "pinging." The lead is most impor-

tant during continuous high-speed, high-load conditions such as towing a heavy trailer or large boat over a long distance. In a pinch, you can even use unleaded gas for normal driving.

Tip: Use only enough octane to avoid frequent knocking. An occasional "ping" won't harm the engine.

The new lower-lead gasolines should *always* be used in:

- 1971-78 trucks over 6,000 lbs.
- post-1978 trucks over 8,500 lbs.

The effect of alcohol blends. To meet the new regulations, oil refiners will turn to other methods to maintain or increase octane ratings. Some will elect to refine gasoline more intensively. Others may add octane enhancers such as ethanol and methanol (more informally known as grain alcohol and wood alcohol).

General Motors supports the use of such alternative fuels to lessen our nation's dependence on imported oil. But to avoid operating and other problems, don't use gasoline containing more than 10 percent ethanol or 5 percent methanol. And in the case of methanol, be sure it contains cosolvents (to prevent

separation of the alcohol from the gasoline) and corrosion inhibitors.

General Motors is taking steps to ensure that its future vehicles can operate problem-free with gasoline containing alcohol. For now, you should know the contents of the fuel going into your gas tank. That's why we support the requirement that gas pumps show the alcohol content of the fuel. Such labels are being used in some states, but they are needed nationwide.

To get the efficiency, driveability and performance we design into your GM vehicles, be sure you use the right fuel. The proper identification and use of gasoline is good for both GM customers and GM cars and trucks.

This advertisement is part of our continuing effort to give customers useful information about their cars and trucks and the company that builds them.



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cret service had already sealed off the area. When Reagan and Shevardnadze emerged from the Oval Office, Warner did his job and recorded the picture.

Despite their best efforts, then, the networks found themselves in possession of a shot they had vowed not to shoot. A flurry of phone calls was made. "There wasn't any real disagreement among us," recalls ABC bureau chief George Watson. "Someone said that if the tape wasn't used that day, somebody — meaning us, since we possessed it — might use it another time. So I said that to be faithful to the initial decision we should destroy the tape." Minutes later, the tape was sent back to the ABC bureau, where it was erased three separate times.

That decision has been criticized by Elvera Ruby, Washington bureau chief of the Independent News Network. Ruby complains that INN and other subscribers to the White House television pool were unfairly denied access to the colonnade footage by what she calls the network bureau chiefs' "arbitrary" decision. "They've arrogated to themselves the decision of what will and won't be covered at the White House, and there seems to be nothing we can do about it," says Ruby. "If that's not a First Amendment issue, I don't know what is."

"I'm sure subscribers to the pool were disappointed," responds CBS bureau chief Jack Smith. "We as pool members were disappointed, too. It's a great picture to have, and we didn't get it because of unreasonable restrictions imposed by the White House."

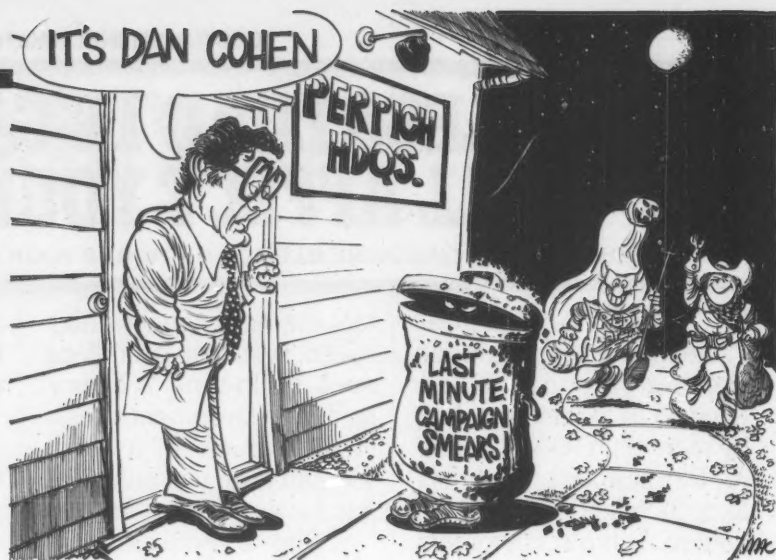
White House assistant press secretary Mark Weinberg refuses to explain the reasons for the restrictions, saying only, "It's an interesting commentary on [the networks'] commitment to the news that they destroyed the tape, isn't it?"

"Our commitment to the news means the opportunity to cover it in a proper and responsible way," rejoins William Headline.

Neither the White House nor the networks appeared to gain much from the affair and it is uncertain how the bureau chiefs will respond to future restrictions. "We've had difficulty finding those occasions where we could stand on principle without depriving ourselves and the public of important information," says ABC's George Watson. "The situation we've gotten into, I'm afraid, is one of explaining our concerns to the White House, being refused, and then doing it their way anyhow."

Mark Hertsgaard

Mark Hertsgaard, author of *Nuclear Inc.*, is writing a book about the Reagan administration and the press.



courtesy Craig Macintosh/Minneapolis Star and Tribune

No way to treat a tipster

For years, journalists have strenuously resisted efforts by law enforcement agencies and the courts to compel the naming of confidential sources. Now, a case about to go to trial in Minnesota raises the novel question of whether a news organization, having promised confidentiality to a source, is justified in voluntarily publishing his or her name.

The lawsuit, which pits Minnesota's two leading newspapers against a former Republican Party politico, dates back to the 1982 election campaign. In late October of that year, Dan Cohen, a former Minneapolis City Council president and friend of Republican gubernatorial candidate Wheelock Whitney, approached several reporters and offered to provide them with copies of court documents revealing that Marlene Johnson, the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, had been convicted of shoplifting in 1970. In exchange for the papers, which were a matter of public record, Cohen asked the reporters to promise that he would not be identified as the source. All agreed, and less than a week before the election Johnson's conviction was a lead item on the evening television news and on the front pages of several of the state's newspapers.

Yet, while most news organizations honored their promises of anonymity, the accounts in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch* disclosed that it was Cohen who had supplied the documents. In addition, the *Star and Tribune*, which only a few days before had endorsed Johnson and her running mate, gubernatorial candidate Rudy Perpich, launched an attack on Cohen. Columnist Jim Klobu-

char accused him of delivering "the shabbiest kind of a late-thrown kidney punch." "Dan Cohen," he wrote, "comes to us in those most improbable robes of all for the political partisan and publicist: the conscience of the community." An editorial-page cartoon the following day depicted Cohen as a garbage can carrying a sign reading: "Last Minute Campaign Smears." And an editorial concluded that the way in which the information had been given to the press, rather than Johnson's conviction and subsequent silence about it, "was the news."

On election day, the Perpich-Johnson ticket won handily, but that hardly ended the controversy. As a result of the adverse publicity, Cohen was fired from his position as director of public relations for one of the area's largest advertising agencies. He subsequently filed suit against the *Star and Tribune* and the *Pioneer Press and Dispatch*, seeking damages for alleged breach of contract, misrepresentation, and fraud.

In pretrial depositions, representatives from both papers conceded that their reporters had promised not to divulge Cohen's name in exchange for the data on Johnson. In fact, the reporters who made the agreement with Cohen — Lori Sturdevant of the *Star and Tribune* and Bill Salisbury of the *Pioneer Press and Dispatch* — testified that they had not initially identified him in their stories and were upset when their editors decided to reveal him as the source. Sturdevant was particularly angered and refused to allow her by-line to go on the story. "I did not like that my word was being broken," she said, "and I felt that that was one way I could disassociate myself from the decision." Both

Sturdevant and Salisbury said that their promises of anonymity had never previously been violated.

Star and Tribune assistant managing editor Mike Finney and *Pioneer Press and Dispatch* executive editor David Hall testified that they had decided to identify Cohen over the objections of their reporters because they believed their readers should know that Johnson's conviction had been made public by a supporter of a rival candidate. Revealing this fact, said Finney in an article in the *Star and Tribune*, was necessary "to put the Johnson record into perspective."

Other editors have expressed themselves more strongly. *Pioneer Press* and *Dispatch* vice president and editor John R. Finnegan charged that Cohen "was trying, in the most blatant way, to manipulate the Twin Cities media for maximum exposure with no risk to himself or his party." *Star and Tribune* managing editor Frank Wright declared, "Expecting confidentiality while so brazenly distributing the material was ridiculous."

Cohen and his attorneys contend that while the editors may have had good reasons for not promising confidentiality in the first place, it was quite another matter to make an agreement, receive the information, and then break it.

Arnold Ismach, formerly a journalism professor at the University of Minnesota and an adviser to Republican candidate Whitney, says that the newspapers abandoned principle in favor of their "subjective feelings" of disapproval of Cohen. "If a reporter doesn't want to agree to confidentiality, the information should be refused," says Ismach, who is now dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Oregon. "If he does agree to it, the agreement must be kept. The particular circumstances of a case don't make a contract less valid."

The newspapers' ultimate defense is their claim that the First Amendment gives them the right to print anything factual regardless of any prior agreements or representations to the contrary. This argument — that the First Amendment supersedes the laws of contract and tort — has not been the subject of any previously reported judicial decision. Unless the parties settle out of court — and, as the *Review* went to press, there were no indications that they planned to do so — the litigation could produce another landmark ruling on what powers are permitted the news media by the First Amendment.

Elliot C. Rothenberg

Elliot C. Rothenberg is an attorney and president of the North Star Legal Foundation in Minneapolis.

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Chicago: lending Rupe a hand

In its latest multimillion-dollar television and radio advertising campaign, the *Chicago Sun-Times* touts the skills of its star reporters and columnists. "Take an expert with you," the tag-line advises prospective readers. But when contract negotiations between the Murdoch-owned paper and its 280 Newspaper Guild reporters and editorial department employees stalled last fall, *Sun-Times* management recruited a batch of out-of-town experts to fill in if a strike should occur.

The weekend before the October 22 strike deadline, *Sun-Times* management flew in seventeen veteran journalists from papers throughout the country. According to an internal management document titled "Profiles of Those Assisting Us During Strike," the seventeen — mostly middle-level editors — came from three other Murdoch-owned papers (*The Boston Herald*, the *New York Post*, and the *San Antonio Express-News*) plus *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, *The Daily Oklahoman*, the *Jacksonville, Florida, Times-Union and Journal*, and the *Wheeling, West Virginia, Intelligencer*. They were put up at an \$80-a-night hotel two blocks from the *Sun-Times* and paid \$150 or more a day. Together with the paper's forty non-union newsroom managers, editorial writers, and secretaries, the seventeen were to form the core of a makeshift staff that would keep the *Sun-Times* on the newsstands during the strike. "This paper was prepared to publish," declares Burton Abrams, director of employee relations.

Although many of the participants are reluctant to discuss their trips to Chicago, most seem to have gone at the request of their publishers. At *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, for example, publisher David Eastery says that the paper's president, Buddy Ward, was asked for help by *Sun-Times* publisher Robert E. Page. At Ward's request, *Journal and Constitution* editor Jim Minter sent word around the newsroom that experienced hands were wanted in Chicago. Four staff members volunteered. According to Minter, the *Journal and Constitution* volunteers received their regular salaries in addition to the per diem provided by the *Sun-Times*.

None of the seventeen who agreed to be interviewed expressed any reservations over the prospect of crossing a picket line. Most considered their trips to Chicago as paid vacations. "I went because I had never been to Chicago," says Plott Brice, an editor on the national desk at *The Journal and Constitution*. "I [wanted] to see the Chicago

Bears but I couldn't even get two tickets to the game."

At the *Sun-Times*, the recruits spent their first days, familiarizing themselves with the paper's computer system. Ed Lewis, an editor at the *Jacksonville Journal*, says that he was also schooled in the paper's headline and layout styles and was prepared to work as a photo editor. Most of the recruits, he says, were expected to work only as copy editors. Don Kopriva, assistant to the editor at the *Sun-Times*, says that none of the recruits would have done any street reporting. The job of the "outsiders," says Kopriva, was to help "stuff" the paper with material from the wire services. In addition, the paper planned to depend on the City News Bureau of Chicago, a local news service owned jointly by the *Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. "None of the outsiders would have covered beats because we had exempt editors who could do that," says Kopriva.

For the most part, the seventeen out-of-towners were kept away from the paper's Guild employees. "We didn't want to fuel the flames," says Ed Lewis. Nevertheless, the *Sun-Times's* Guild employees were made aware of the contingency plan. "Two imports were ostentatiously paraded around the newsroom" four days before the strike deadline, says Charles Nicodemus, star investigative reporter at the *Sun-Times* and the head of the Guild negotiating committee. "They were two scruffily dressed, meaty-faced, rough-looking types, who looked more like goons than professional journalists," adds Nicodemus. "Their presence provoked guffaws among the city-side staff."

In the end, a strike was averted when the Guild agreed to give up a clause in its contract that enabled members to resign with severance pay in the event the paper was sold, a key provision given that Murdoch had recently purchased a Chicago TV station and therefore, according to federal regulations, must divest himself of the *Sun-Times*. In return, management agreed to a 5 percent pay hike and to continue giving a bonus for night work.

Although Nicodemus insists that the recruits would have put out a shabby paper and decries the *Sun-Times's* "infantile tactics," another member of the Guild negotiating committee, who requested anonymity, admits that management's contingency plan made the membership nervous. "What really bothered me were the intimidation tactics," says a *Sun-Times* sports editor. "Management people would say, 'Rupert Murdoch is

a tough guy and he's going to break you guys.'"

Despite the settlement, there is lingering resentment in the *Sun-Times* newsroom against the seventeen would-be strikebreakers. "We'll be contacting them ourselves," Nicodemus says. "And we plan to turn their names over to the international Guild. One day these people may be looking for jobs at Guild newspapers."

Barnaby Dinges

Barnaby Dinges, an occasional stringer for the *Sun-Times*, is a graduate student at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

Remodeling Mother

Mother Jones, the nation's largest-circulation left-wing magazine, has distinguished itself as a fierce critic of multinational corporations and a watchdog of the new right. But as the magazine celebrates its tenth anniversary, it is in the midst of an identity crisis. Suffering from a growing debt and a steady drop in circulation, *Mother Jones* has hired a new publisher, is searching for a new editor, plans a graphic redesign and editorial overhaul, and may even change its name.

Founded in 1975 by Adam Hochschild, Richard Parker, and the late Paul Jacobs, all former editors of the celebrated West Coast muckraking magazine *Ramparts*, *Mother Jones* set out to provide a stylish vehicle for popularizing left-liberal ideas for a nationwide audience. It quickly succeeded far beyond its founders' expectations, surpassing its target circulation of 100,000, winning three National Magazine Awards, and establishing a reputation for aggressive investigative reporting. But after five years the magazine sputtered and stalled; then it slipped into reverse. Since 1980, circulation has dropped from 233,000 to 150,000.

Even at its peak, says Adam Hochschild, now a contributing editor and the only one of the original founders still with the magazine, *Mother Jones* lost money. But then, as he puts it, "all political magazines in this country — left, right, and center — lose money." In recent years, however, rising postal rates and the decline in circulation have increased the magazine's cumulative deficit to \$3 million. About half has been made up by Hochschild, whose father was chairman of AMAX, a large international mining concern. The other half has come from reader donations. "More than twenty-seven thousand readers have given us money above the subscription price," says publisher

CUR/Kelth Bendis



Don Hazen, who joined the magazine last May after managing political campaigns in New York City. Hazen adds that returns from a dramatic direct-mail appeal to readers last September were running ahead of projections, enabling *Mother Jones* to publish one of the two issues it was planning to skip this year to cut costs.

Halting the San Francisco-based monthly's steady slide in circulation may be more of a problem. *Mother Jones* editors say that the magazine's early editorial successes inflated its circulation far beyond its bedrock constituency, which Hochschild estimates at "one hundred and fifty thousand to one hundred and ninety thousand, depending on the mood of the country." In the Reagan era, staff members complain, that number is shrinking.

But critics disagree, placing the blame for its decline closer to home — on the magazine's journalistic standards, its tone, and its editor. "Can a magazine continue to exist if it continually sacrifices readability, sexiness, and conflicting viewpoints on the altar of political correctness?" asked Jeffrey Klein, a former *Mother Jones* editor who was quoted

in an article in *California* magazine last summer. A *Mother Jones* contributor who asked not to be named objects to the magazine's "pervasive air of smugness and self-satisfaction. They're so sure they're right. It's off-putting in a visceral way. When my subscription ran out last year, I didn't get around to renewing it."

Some at the magazine fault Deirdre English, a feminist scholar who took over as executive editor in 1980. (She resigned at the end of 1985 to devote more time to her own writing.) English's management style and emphasis on fiction and think pieces over hard-nosed reporting, they say, took the edge off the magazine. "Deirdre was not very accessible and not real tactful," says one staff member. "Editorial decisions were made in a mysterious way."

English replies that she was as accessible as an executive editor could be and still remain efficient. "My self-criticism would be the opposite," she says, "that I didn't spend enough time going around the country representing the magazine." In addition, English, who expects to stay on at *Mother Jones* as a consultant, is proud that, under her lead-

ership, the magazine became a better rounded general-interest publication. "*Mother Jones* is not just a magazine of investigative reporting," she says.

The "new" *Mother Jones*, according to Hazen, will feature an elegant redesign, shorter stories, and perhaps a new name, to prevent *Mother Jones* — named for turn-of-the-century labor organizer Mary Harris "Mother" Jones — from being confused with a women's magazine. The publication will also, he says, offer a mix of service features and political reporting for the magazine's average reader, formerly a thirty-two-year-old earning \$23,000 a year, but now a thirty-five-year-old earning nearly \$33,000. *Mother Jones* readers, according to marketing surveys, have exchanged cheap jug wine for imported beers, and a quarter of them are now parents. "People's politics are being played out in smaller, more personal ways," Hazen says. "They want the world to be better, but they don't want to do that at the expense of their lives. I hate the word 'lifestyle,' but we will have more on personal concerns like parenting and socially responsible investments."

Is *Mother Jones* trying to appeal to yuppies? Decidedly not, answers Hochschild. "There will be new features, new columns, new authors, but our soul will be the same."

Still, by so visibly attempting to adapt to the 1980s, *Mother Jones* risks being accused of violating its principles. But not changing would have left it open to the criticism that it is a nostalgic souvenir of the 1960s. That may be what catch-22 feels like in the decade of the Big Chill.

David Armstrong

David Armstrong is the author of *A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America*.

Muckraking teachers score scoops

The indictment of a city high school principal charged with sexually abusing his teenage students was front-page news in Chicago last fall, but the story first came to light months earlier in an unlikely place. It appeared in *Substance*, a monthly tabloid with a circulation of roughly 4,500, which is written on a volunteer basis by teachers and has made a name for itself by raking muck on the education beat.

Substance first scooped the dailies and local TV stations last spring, when it reported that the principal was under investigation. Follow-up stories in its May and June issues

accused administrators of having dragged their feet when students first complained about the alleged abuses and questioned whether the Chicago Teachers Union was firm in its commitment to back up members testifying against the principal.

"We're advocates and we're biased," says George N. Schmidt, a high school English and journalism teacher who wrote some of the stories. "We see the school system from the perspective of the classroom."

Substance, which meets its expenses out

of its fifty-cent-a-copy sales and an occasional ad, turned ten years old last summer. The paper was started by Substitutes United for Better Schools (S.U.B.S.), a group of substitute teachers who had organized because "we were invisible," as editor Terry Czernik puts it. "We had no voice within the union," she says, "and were ignored by the school administration."

The publication's first issues were mimeographed and consisted mainly of attacks on the leadership of the teachers' union. The

paper's tone was militant, and its staff's lack of journalistic training showed. Exclamation points and heavy-handed editorializing were the rule; one issue featured a picture of a superintendent picking her nose at a meeting.

Story topics grew out of staff meetings held in the paper's downtown office, as they do now. "In the beginning, we'd often end up in rambling political arguments, but now the editor has the final say," says Czernik, who became editor in 1980. "Of course, if people don't like it, they can vote out the editor."

It's unlikely that Czernik will be voted out any time soon; she is credited with establishing the policies that have brought *Substance* respectability. "She told us to just print the facts and stop telling people how to think," Schmidt says. "She stressed that we need not be objective in the journalistic sense, but that we must be accurate."

Substance's first big scoop came in 1982. The subject was Marva Collins, a former substitute teacher who had started a private school and later invited reporters to witness such achievements as third graders reciting Shakespeare from memory. The *Chicago Sun-Times* characterized Collins as a miracle worker. Stories in *The Washington Post* and on *Sixty Minutes* lauding her work with problem kids led ultimately to a CBS docudrama called "The Marva Collins Story," starring Cicely Tyson.

George Schmidt, who began investigating Collins at a time when he had been laid off as a teacher, produced a four-part series labeling her story "a media hoax." *Substance* printed photocopies of government checks to Collins, contradicting her assertion that her school got no public funding, and challenged her claim that student test scores had improved markedly under her tutelage. Her school, Schmidt wrote, "is at best an average, very expensive alternative school. . . ." Collins suggested that she might sue *Substance*, but never did, and Schmidt's stories served as models for other investigations.

Last year Schmidt was assigned to a full-time teaching position in a high school. As other *Substance* writers and readers have made similar progress, the tabloid's emphasis has shifted to reflect their changing concerns. During contract negotiations, the paper devotes most of its issues to tedious examinations of the school board's budget, detailing charges of waste with the aim of freeing funds for salary hikes. Proposed academic programs also get close inspection.

Still, the paper has not abandoned its roots. Recent issues have featured stories about a national shortage of substitutes and compared salaries of subs in Chicago, New York, and

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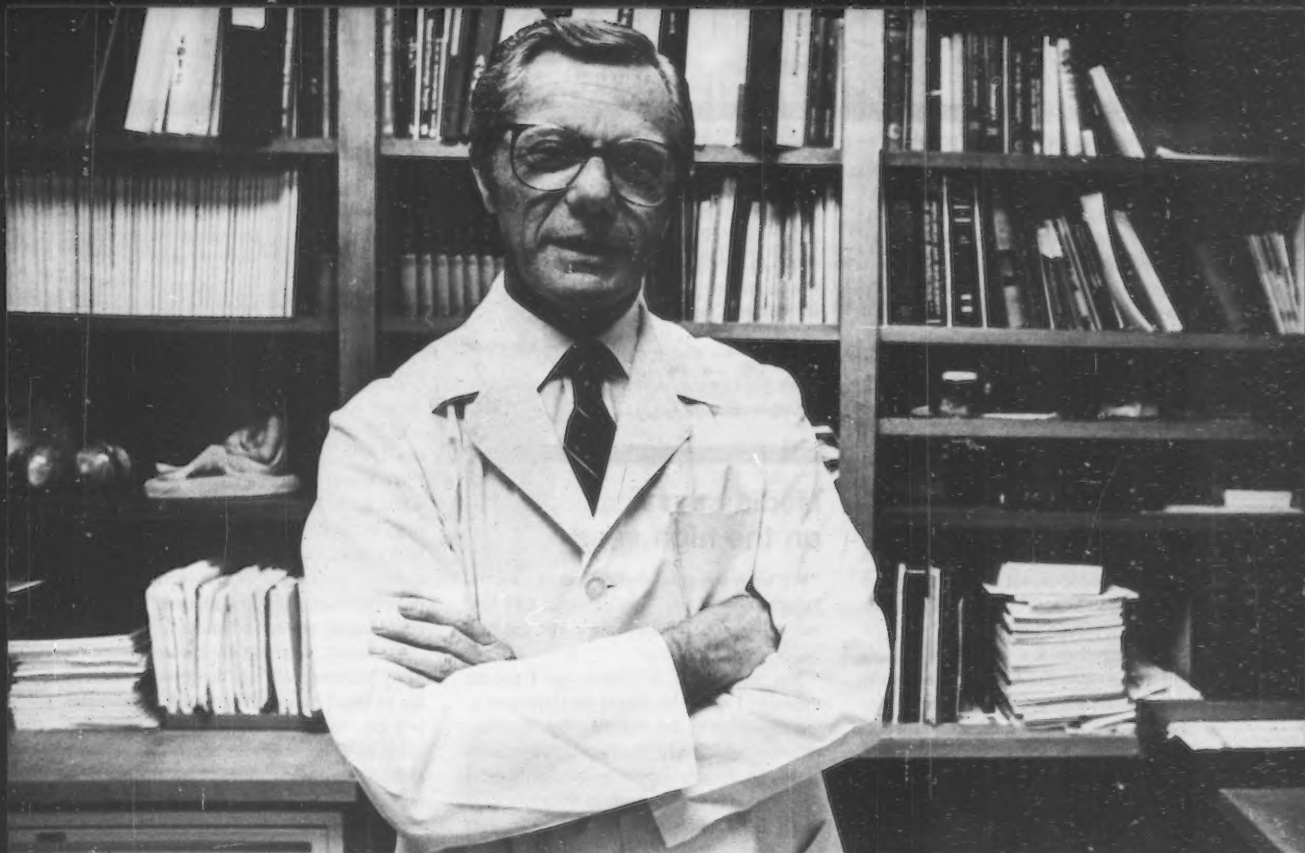
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Donald H. Minkler, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Center for Population and Reproductive Health Policy, University of California

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Los Angeles. The paper's most popular feature is "Subscripts," a column which regularly snipes at administrators. ("We didn't express any regrets when [former deputy superintendent] Alice Blair retired because we didn't feel any.")

Robert M. Saigh, director of information for the Chicago public schools, concedes that *Substance* reports "have been discussed at the highest levels, usually in addition to other media input." And Jean Latz Griffin, education writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, says she often gets story ideas from the paper. "They do a very good job of pointing out problems that I and other reporters could never have known about," she says. The paper has something of a wider appeal, too. Steven Cohen, a subscriber who said he is not a teacher, educational administrator, or parent, wrote in to say, "I enjoy *Substance* because I enjoy good muckraking."

Muckraking does not mean sensationalism, however. *Substance* first learned of the sexual abuse allegations, for instance, in December 1984 when a social worker complained that no one in the school system's central office would take action on her reports, but it decided to hold the story. "I recommended that she see a Chicago Teachers Union lawyer," Schmidt says. "We

knew one headline wouldn't change anything." When Schmidt learned of the criminal investigation, he went with the story. Czernik told him to write it plainly. He recalls: "She told me to sit down and read a bunch of weather reports, and that I should write the story as dryly and cleanly as they are written."

Arnie Weissmann

Arnie Weissmann, a former Chicagoan, is a writer in Austin, Texas.

Media savvy on the high seas

"We want someone on the ship in case the French blow it up," my editor at UPI told me. "If you're in the water, just get to a phone."

She was joking, of course, but I got the message. I would be aboard the *Greenpeace*, the replacement for the flagship *Rainbow Warrior*, which had been sunk two months earlier by French secret-service agents as it was preparing for a voyage to Mururoa Atoll to try to disrupt a series of French nuclear tests there.

From the moment the big refurbished tug with the rainbows painted on its hull departed from Curacao, an island in the Dutch Antilles, on September 14, it was clear that, in many ways, the six European and American journalists on board were its most important cargo. As I learned by reading *Warriors of the Rainbow*, Greenpeace's unofficial history, the group was founded in 1971 by Canadian journalists Robert Hunter and Ben Metcalfe, and had reached its current prominence — it has 1.4 million members and offices in fifteen countries — principally through its skill at attracting the news media. "We saw it as a media war . . .," Hunter wrote of Greenpeace's first campaign in *Warriors of the Rainbow*. "Madison Avenue and Hitler had changed the face of the world through application of the tactic of image projection and the environmental movement could hardly attempt to do less."

On board, veteran Greenpeace filmmaker Tony Marriner laid out the group's strategy for its latest campaign just as bluntly. "This is a p.r. war," he said. "The French government wants to show the world that we're at fault. And we want to change public policy. The only way we're going to do that is via the electorate, [by] creating a debate and keeping it alive via the media."

Despite Marriner's remarks, we soon learned that there was tremendous ambivalence within Greenpeace about the news media's role in its campaigns. Many of the activists on board, led by the captain, who stayed in his cabin for most of the voyage, disagreed with the leadership's view that all events should be designed to generate as much publicity as possible. They were suspicious of the media, believing that our editors were interested only in sensationalism, not issues. Another common complaint was that journalists too often stay on the sideline; they never "risk getting involved," as one crew member told me.

On the *Greenpeace*, however, we journalists had little choice but to get involved; no one would have talked to us if we had walked around the ship and simply observed. Thus, we found ourselves helping to carry supplies to the accompanying protest ships, taking the helm, painting the anchor, and even translating radio conversations between the *Greenpeace*'s captain and French commanders aboard the two warships and three tugs that maneuvered around us just outside the test site's twelve-mile territorial limit.

We were covering the campaigners, but they were also covering us. In the busy radio room, where we typed our telexes and made our calls, campaign coordinator Gerd Leibold would correct us whenever he picked

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up on a mistake, even if it meant tugging on our arms while we were on the phone. Not surprisingly, a few arguments resulted.

We were not allowed at crew meetings, but Leopold was always available for questions. One crew member was so wary of us that she insisted on writing out her quotes in full and then peered over my shoulder as I typed them out. I decided to post my articles on the bulletin board in the ship's mess so that everyone could see what I was up to. No one on board had access to any newspapers. Posting my copy was a gesture of openness that I thought might engender some trust. In certain cases, it did. But for the most part the practice seemed only to create more opportunities for disagreement whenever there was a factual error or an observation considered off the mark. One night, for example, the *Greenpeace* slipped behind an island to lure closer a French frigate that had been trailing us on the horizon. Later, I wrote that the *Greenpeace* had "slipped out of the frigate's radar range." After reading the story, Wolfgang, one of the ship's mates, approached me, laughing. He said that the *Greenpeace* had gone out of radar "vision," not "range." He was correct, and I thanked him for pointing this out. He smiled and said that the point was obvious. All I had to do

was read the technical books up in the chart room. I told him that I hadn't had the time and that there was a limited amount of research I could do because I had to meet deadlines. He shook his head and walked away.

Another time, Pierre Gleizes, a former Greenpeace campaigner who had since joined the AP as a photographer and was on assignment for the agency, chided me for engaging in a bit of sensationalism when I described the ship as having passed through a "storm." A storm, he explained, is when the waves are up to forty feet and the sea is completely covered with long white patches of foam. I told him that I had gone out on deck and the rain was blowing so hard that I could hardly walk. He said that what we had experienced was properly called a "moderate gale." I replied that that was a term few of my readers would be able to visualize. Then I turned the tables and asked him how he justified taking a photograph which appeared to show a huge French frigate practically sitting on top of a tiny Greenpeace inflatable, when in reality the frigate was much farther away. Pierre said that he was limited by his few camera lenses but that I had thousands of words at my disposal. We both agreed that the ship had gone through some rough weather.

After six weeks, the crew's wariness of us did not appear to diminish. Ironically, our presence and the amount of coverage we had given to the *Greenpeace*'s potential conflict with the French insured that the voyage would be uneventful. The French navy would never have roughed up the *Greenpeace* with six reporters on board. In the end, one of the ship's two electrical generators failed just as the protest off Mururoa was getting under way, and the *Greenpeace* was forced to limp back to New Zealand.

Although most of us had filed regularly throughout the voyage, some of the journalists on board believed that they had wasted their time. Even before the abrupt failure of the generator, Gianluigi da Rold, a veteran foreign correspondent from the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, had lost interest in the story, preferring to remain in his bunk. Perhaps our Greenpeace critics were correct: most journalists are interested only in confrontation. But then, if it weren't for that, the *Greenpeace* might not have set off in the first place.

Lon Appleby

Lon Appleby, a Canadian free-lance writer and documentary producer, was UPI's correspondent aboard the *Greenpeace*.



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B. HUMAN HEAD KEPT ALIVE SIX DAYS
— Decapitated accident victim blinked eyes to communicate!

C. MALICE IN THE PALACE — Forget Shy Di! Behind this facade is a willful woman who has family servants on the run and who's dancing the night away — sometimes without Charles.

D. STAR WARS DEFENSE SYSTEM NOT FOR PROTECTION AGAINST RUSSIANS, BUT SPACE ALIENS!

E. ANGLO-MANIA . . . Charles [tried] to make contact on a Ouija board with the shade of his beloved "Uncle Dickie" Mounthatten.

The answer is E.

A, B, and D ran in the supermarket tabloids *National Examiner* and *Weekly World News*, C in Time Inc.'s very own gossip rag, *People*. But E, astonish-

ingly, appeared in a publication supposedly head and shoulders above the other four, one which billed itself at the time of its rebirth in 1983 as a sophisticated journal of arts and ideas — *Vanity Fair*.

More astonishingly, *Vanity Fair* is by no means the only reputable journal getting into the gossip and titillation trade, if voluminous coverage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana's November visit to Washington was any indication. Consider the following excerpt:

Diana shared a flat . . . in the Earl's Court section of London. . . . The most famous "leather" pub in London was just down the street, and every night at 11 the entire area became a meat market for cruising gays. . . .

Diana's scene was considerably more up-market, though in its way nearly as wild. . . .

Her set — or what would have been her set had she not entered the cloistered world of the royal wife — is in many ways the most decadent group of young people England has seen since Regency days — heavily into drugs, homosexuality, cross dressing. . . . Physically [Diana] was a classic of the breed: blond and leggy, with one of those physiques that . . .

Alas, I must break off here, exciting though the passage is, to remark on the journalistic sleight of hand it illustrates. It's a classic case of guilt by association, insinuating, of course, that the princess is less pure than meets the eye. It sounds like gossip-sheet fare, but, in fact, the passage appeared in that wholesome family publication *Newsweek*, as part of its October 28 "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner" cover story on the royal visit.

Sexual innuendo is only one of the sales-boosting techniques of tabloid and personality reporting borrowed by the journalistic mainstream for the royal visit. Four other principles of junk-food journalism were also widely evident.

1. First and foremost of these is: *Spotlight the trivial on the assumption that's what the audience really wants.*

Spotlighting the trivial is, needless to say, never too difficult where the royals are concerned. Prince Charles has less political power than the mayor of Peoria and for all practical purposes he will still have less even when he becomes king — which may not take place for twenty-five years. His wife, a onetime kindergarten teacher, is not known for pronouncements on affairs of state. They were in Washington to promote British products at a J.C. Penney store and to beat the drums for tourism on the seep-tered isle — little else.

Keeping the two in the spotlight in the face of competition from pressing events such as the superpower summit may



"It's Like Putting Me in Slavery."

"For someone to take from me without my say—so is like putting me back in slavery."

Thirty-two years of teaching elementary school students in Chicago have honed Annie Lee Hudson's ability to boil issues to their basic terms—and nothing is more basic than freedom.

Annie Lee Hudson rejects slavery. She makes it easy to see why she—and six other Chicago teachers—are fighting heavy-handed officials of the Chicago Teachers Union in a lawsuit headed for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Like her fellow teachers, many of them former union members, Mrs. Hudson is being forced to pay compulsory "agency fees" to the union hierarchy to continue teaching.

Big Labor's mandate: "No dues, no job."

Annie Lee Hudson can pay the union or she can join the unemployed.

Union officials in turn are spending the compulsory dues they demand on activities which have nothing in the world to do with collective bargaining.

The result: Annie Lee Hudson—and millions of workers like her—

are forced to finance radical political, social and ideological causes they would never support voluntarily.

And when teachers protest, they wind up in a kangaroo court controlled by the very same union pros who claimed to "represent" them in the first place.

From start to finish, the scheme violates basic human liberties. Annie Lee Hudson knows it; her fellow teachers know it; and so does the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

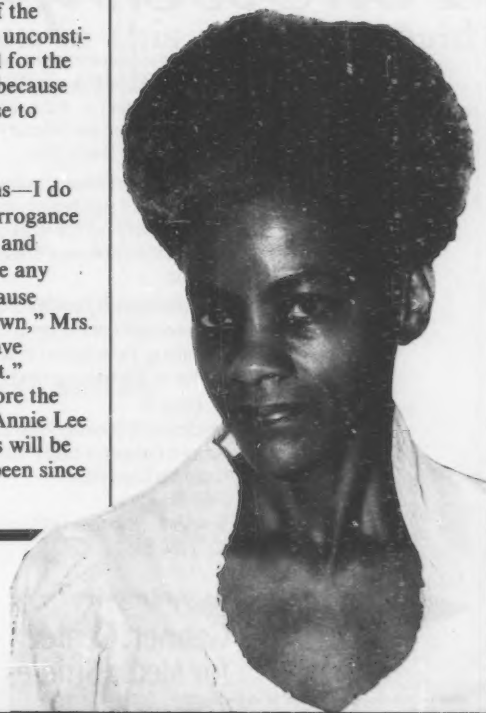
The appeals court ruled just last year that major portions of the compulsory dues setup are unconstitutional. The case is bound for the U.S. Supreme Court only because greedy union officials refuse to relent.

"I believe in unions—I do not believe in arrogance and corruption and people doing me any kind of way they want because they're the only game in town," Mrs. Hudson offers. "Unions have become very, very arrogant."

When this case goes before the highest court in the land, Annie Lee Hudson and her colleagues will be represented, as they have been since

1983, by attorneys for the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation. The Foundation is proud of its role of assistance and, in fact, is helping everyone it can—currently in more than 300 cases involving violations of academic and political freedom, illegal union political spending, union violence and other abuses of basic human rights.

If you would like to help people like Annie Lee Hudson, we would like to hear from you.



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sound difficult, but in fact proved to be no problem. *The New York Times* wrote reams of often purple prose on the visit, including a November 12 front-page sally with the nonsensical headline: WHEN THE ROYAL PAIR TALK, YOU CAN HEAR A TIARA DROP.

The *Times* was easily surpassed by *The Washington Post*, whose November 10 edition devoted part or all of nine pages to the "story," including, besides twenty photographs, a front-page report

and five additional articles totaling 200 paragraphs. The *Post* had been building up the story in advance articles for days: ROYALS FOR ALL THE WHIRL, ROYAL RULES TO LIVE AND DI BY, etc., etc.

Time weighed in with its own November 11 ("Here They Come!") cover story, and the networks devoted considerable airtime — including live CNN coverage and an ABC 20/20 rebroadcast of a British Independent Television Network interview with the royal couple.

■ The Gannett Center for Media Studies invites applications for its 1986–87 fellowship program. Fellows will implement individual projects and participate in the general activities of the Center, which is an institute for the advanced study of mass communication and technological change.

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Fellowships

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■ *Selection criteria:* Appointments will be based on (a) the proposal's significance and quality (b) the applicant's ability to carry out the work and (c) relevance of the project to the resources of the Center and its New York location.

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2. Principle number two is an absolute must: *Lay great stress on gossip.*

U.S. news organizations and reputable journals of opinion might have had difficulty with this one, given that troublesome stricture to strive for accuracy. In the case of the royals, after all, most of the gossip comes from Fleet Street/aka the Street of Shame — not the world's most reliable fount of facts.

But if the visit of Chuck and Di accomplished nothing else, it did allow the U.S. press to probe what some took to be a loophole in the accuracy requirement. *Vanity Fair* and *Newsweek* were pioneers of the approach, which assumes that it is fine to repeat the most outrageous gossip, rumor, and innuendo so long as you suggest a little later on that it might, in fact, be a wee bit off target.

Vanity Fair editor Tina Brown was first through the gate with her October cover piece on Di, "The Mouse That Roared." "Magazines and newspapers in every capital crackle with backstairs backchat about the princess's autocratic ways," Brown wrote. "SHE has banished all his old friends. SHE has made him give up shooting. SHE throws slippers at him when she can't get his attention. . . . The debonair Prince of Wales, Royal Highness, Duke of Cornwall, heir to the throne, is, it seems, pussy-whipped from here to eternity. Can it be true?" After insinuating at some length that it was true, she then, in her last paragraph, almost as an afterthought, suggested that it was not.

Newsweek, attaining new heights, squeezed all the juice it could out of lurid palace gossip and then unabashedly covered itself with the following remarkable fig leaf: "The rumors are alternately ludicrous, spiteful, and unseemly. . . . Is any of it true? Probably not."

The Washington Post and *USA Today* resorted to full-page Diana "Q&A" features, laced with titillating rumors and half-hearted denials.

3. A third key principle of junk-food journalism is: *Quote "experts," however dubious — readers like at least a shred of credibility in their escapism.* To wit: "European researchers have concluded in a shocking new study that vampires were AIDS carriers — and gay! (*Weekly World News*, November 26)."

Mainstream U.S. journals were not quite so audacious as this, but they quickly fell into line with the "expert" approach to the royals. Tina Brown, for instance, cited Fleet Street's Anthony Holden, would-be Boswell to Charles, as saying he had watched the prince "fall in love before his very eyes." Holden

**'Are sophisticated
national news reporters
more inclined
to drool over royalty
than the man
in the street?'**

must have had very sharp eyes, given the distance at which the press is kept from the prince.

The *New York Times* quoted "renowned" royal expert James Whitaker of London's tabloid *Daily Mirror* denying that the prince had become a wife-dominated "wimp." Whitaker spends much of his time stalking the outskirts of royal estates, armed with binoculars

and zoom-lens camera. In 1983, he reported in the *Mirror* that "Princess Diana is expecting her second baby" — three months before she conceived.

Unfazed by or perhaps oblivious to Whitaker's track record, *USA Today* actually hired him to write an insider's series, billed him as a close friend of Diana's (EXCLUSIVE REPORT: "I REMEMBER OLD DAYS"), and had him "stand in" for the princess, answering questions "on her behalf" in a "Dear Di" mail column.

Incidentally, Whitaker was quoted in the November 13 *Washington Post* as admitting to "jazzing up" news stories — a practice which the paper said he described as "a sacred tradition in which words, though not strictly factual, can be possessed of transcendent truth."

"The Bible does this all the time," Whitaker explained. One can't help wondering how much jazzing up he did on behalf of *USA Today*.

4. The fourth principle is: *Blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, thus capitalizing on whatever it is in people that makes soap operas popular.*

Tabloids commonly describe soap-opera plots as news events and compare real-life newsmakers and celebrities to the kings and queens of soap.

I've lost count of the soap-opera comparisons I had to endure while researching this article, but rest assured they included "Dynasty Di," "Dallas at the Palace," and umpteen parallels between the princess and Joan Collins.

How should the press have covered the visit? Probably in the unfrenzied manner of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and several other regional papers, which satisfied themselves with the occasional photograph and short item inside. Kudos are also in order for columnist Joseph Kraft, who trenchantly argued that rubbing elbows with the royals appealed to the Reaganite nouveau rich because it gave these insecure Americans an aura of legitimacy, and for *Washington Post* book critic Jonathan Yardley, who wrote a devastating piece on the royals as glorified hucksters. The perspective was refreshing.

By and large, however, the press sim-

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—John Lawrence
Los Angeles Times
on CBS' "Business and the Media"

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CAPITAL LETTER

ply went wild over the visitation. Why?

An easy answer is popular demand — American audiences have a “thing” about royalty and were enraptured by its arrival. “They came, we saw, and she conquered,” declared *USA Today*’s Mei-Mei Chan in a climactic report packed with adulatory comments from Di worshippers who came from afar, many bearing gifts such as a framed sampler, spelling out Diana’s name, made from one fan’s wedding dress.

A more conspiratorial explanation for the coverage is that sale-hungry editors created an artificial demand, stoking Di mania with advance hype, then providing more and more royal cotton candy to keep pace with the swollen public appetite.

Both of these theories are called into question by the statistical evidence, which suggests that, in fact, there was not much demand, either spontaneous or artificial, for the Chuck and Di show. According to an ABC-*Washington Post* poll of 1,506 Americans, which was released during the visit, 67 percent had no opinion of Charles, and 58 percent had no opinion of Diana. Let’s hear it for indifference! When it came to favorable ratings, the prince got a meager 29 percent, and even his wife, who outdid him with 38 percent, fell short of the less-than-beloved Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev (39 percent).

As if to contradict its own findings, the *Post* ran a larger-than-life photograph of Diana’s face alongside the poll and an eighty-six-paragraph “Diana Fact Book.” The rest of the press, also seemingly unimpressed by the evidence, continued with the royal razzle-dazzle. The reason for this is a mystery.

Are sophisticated national news reporters more inclined to drool over royalty than the man in the street? Do these reporters secretly want to work for the *National Enquirer*? Do they enjoy producing journalism that deadens the mind like daytime television?

In 1975, Nora Ephron wrote a disgruntled prediction about personality reporting: “There seems to be no stopping it. *People* is the future and it works.” Ten years later, knee-deep in Chuck and Di clippings, all I can say is that the future has arrived. ■

COMMENT

Un-American activities

As if the press didn't already have enough credibility problems, it is now being depicted as a conduit for the KGB. Central Intelligence director William J. Casey sounded the alarm in September when he devoted one of his relatively rare public speeches to a description of the "active measures" being employed by the KGB to subvert public opinion. Casey warned especially about "disinformation" — the planting by the Soviets of "half-truths, lies, and rumors to discredit free-world policies or individuals." Disinformation campaigns, Casey added, "are projected and reinforced by media manipulation. The Soviets conduct a massive worldwide effort to manipulate foreign media, thus transforming portions of the press into an unwitting propaganda machine."

The main point of Casey's remarks was that Americans should brace themselves for an all-out disinformation assault on the president's Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as Star Wars. Casey predicted "a propaganda campaign likely to assume unprecedented proportions" as the Soviets give "high priority" to mobilizing opposition to SDI "among our allies and in our country."

While Casey stopped short of suggesting that the KGB had recruited American journalists for its disinformation efforts, a Voice of America employee, Lisa Jameson, articulated just this suspicion in an October talk at Stanford University. Citing as her source two Soviet defectors who had posed as journalists while working for the KGB, Jameson said the KGB may have hundreds of recruited agents among foreign journalists, including some in the United States, who are "ready at any time to place prepared stories in their national media." *Editor & Publisher* was so perturbed by this possibility that in a November 2 editorial it suggested it might be time "we went back to attaching labels to stories that might be suspect as to their origins and facts."

At the same time, readers of the *Los Angeles Times* were given reason to suspect that they had been the victims of "active measures" by the KGB. Richard Sybert, a special assistant to the secretary of defense, wrote in a letter to the *Times*, published on November 2, that a basically critical series on the Strategic Defense Initiative by *Times* reporter Robert Scheer "was a masterpiece of disinformation." Complaining about a "flood of pre-summit disinformation" on the SDI, Sybert attacked Scheer and others for "completely false" statements, "myth," and "fabrication."

In a recent interview, Sybert said that he had not intended to accuse Scheer of disinformation in the sense of the term as used within the intelligence community. Rather, he had used "disinformation" to mean the use of factually wrong

information, "some of which does come from the Soviets," by "people who either know it's wrong or who haven't done their homework." Scheer, said Sybert, had used straw men and red herrings to "very skillfully present a bunch of alleged facts and disinform people." Sybert went on to say that he "in no way intended to suggest that Scheer was an agent of Soviet propaganda, although this sort of thing lends itself to this purpose."

Certainly, the Soviets are out to undermine the president's missile-defense initiative; just as certainly, many Americans — including scores of reputable scientists — are alarmed by the president's plan. The press has an obligation to do its own digging on the issue and to report all sides of the debate, including what critics — both foreign and domestic — have to say.

U.S. officials have obligations, too. If they are going to allege a massive anti-SDI disinformation campaign aimed at the press by the KGB, they should take care not to make indiscriminate allegations of disinformation when that term has become virtually synonymous with intelligence activity. And they should not regard agreement with Soviet views as a Soviet propaganda triumph. Such simplistic thinking can lead to bizarre conclusions.

Take, for instance, Casey's assertion that a prime Soviet disinformation objective is to "encourage European and American antinuclear groups to view the SDI program as threatening an increase in the nuclear arms race when, in fact, it promises the opposite." If the notion that SDI might spur the arms race is to be equated with Soviet propaganda, what is one to conclude about a passage in Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's pre-summit report to the president? In that report, a copy of which was leaked to the press, Weinberger warned that "even a *probable* territorial [Soviet missile] defense would require us to increase the number of our offensive forces and their ability to penetrate Soviet defenses to assure that our operational plans could be executed." Surely the same logic applies in the case of a U.S. missile-defense system.

Disinformation, evidently, can lurk in the unlikeliest places. Meanwhile, in-depth coverage of the debate over SDI would seem to be the best antidote to whatever disinformation Soviet intelligence agents might be trying to sneak into the U.S. press.

GILBERT CRANBERG

Gilbert Cranberg was editorial page editor of The Des Moines Register from 1975 to 1982; he now teaches journalism at the University of Iowa.

Forgetting ourselves

A disaster on American soil in which scores of Americans are killed would seem to rate as big news. Yet when mud slides wiped out a shantytown on the outskirts of Puerto Rico's third largest city last fall, killing 132 people, few mainland news organizations other than the wire services bothered to jump on the story. Those that ultimately sent reporters to Ponce generally did so days after the event, prompting *El Diario-La Prensa*, New York's largest Spanish-language daily, to blast the English-language press for giving "so little importance to the life of our Puerto Rico brothers and sisters."

One notable exception was *The New York Times*, which quickly dispatched two reporters to the scene and followed up with a piece about the Puerto Rican community's bitter disappointment over the poor coverage of the disaster. In it, the excuses made by editors for their slow-footed response were honest but lame. The *Achille Lauro* had been hijacked that week; the Mexican earthquakes had dulled sensitivity to another Latin American disaster story. In the

words of New York *Daily News* editor F. Gilman Spencer, "There were a lot of other things going on, and we just blew it." Such an admission might be understandable, given the inherent difficulties of covering foreign news. But Puerto Rico is America. Or is it?

Sometime over the past twenty years, Puerto Rico floated away from American notice. It is not hard to understand why. Neither a state nor a separate nation, the island lies nearly 1,000 miles from the mainland — about 2,500 miles from Peoria. Its people speak Spanish and cast no ballots in national elections. The island's problems stew rather than erupt. As a result, the concerns of 5.3 million Americans (3.3 million in Puerto Rico, plus their relatives on the mainland) have disappeared into a Bermuda Triangle of stereotypes somewhere between *West Side Story*, Club Med, and the F.A.L.N. underground.

Yet Puerto Rico has not always been relegated to obscurity. Presidents from Franklin Roosevelt to John Kennedy took a keen interest in the island. In 1952, planners and politicians hailed Puerto Rico's newly adopted commonwealth government as an imaginative and far-sighted resolution of colonial tensions. Earl Warren called it "perhaps

Darts and laurels

Laurel: to the Lexington, Kentucky, *Herald-Leader* and reporters Jeffrey Marx and Michael York, for "Playing Above the Rules," an unusual shot at the University of Kentucky basketball team in which it was revealed that, over the years, Big Blue boosters had been dribbling a steady stream of illegal cash handouts to various members of the team. Based on extensive interviews that named both former Wildcats and their "sugar daddies," the paper's probe of the sacred subject brought bomb threats, petitions, 369 canceled subscriptions, and rolls of blue and white toilet paper tossed in the editor's yard.

Dart: to the *Philadelphia Daily News*, for "Their Just Desserts," an unsavory front-page story in its October 23 food section reporting on the banality of the last meals requested by the forty-nine convicts executed since the restoration of the death penalty in 1976. Categorizing the convicts according to their culinary choices ("Junk Food Addicts," "Surf and Turf Crowd"), the piece was accompanied by a sixteen-inch-high photo of an electric chair bedecked with food and sickeningly captioned "Just Heat and Serve."

Laurel: to *The Nation* and free-lance writers Roberta Brandes Gratz and Eric Fettmann, for "The Selling of Miss Liberty," a free-swinging follow-up to a little-publicized congressional hearing last summer that raised disturbing questions about the handling of the national project to restore the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island to their original historic luster. Three months in the making, the November 9 report recounts the less-than-uplifting saga of how, under the highly visible leadership of Chrysler savior Lee Iacocca, the privately financed project came to be tarnished by cor-

porate commercialization, cronyism, boondoggling, and graft (not to mention a federal bailout), and how, with less than a year to go before the scheduled reopening, no properly approved master plan for Liberty and Ellis Islands yet exists.

Dart: to the Wichita, Kansas, *Eagle-Beacon*, for shifting into reverse. After running a reprint on October 17 of a *Changing Times* consumers' piece on how to get the best deal on a new 1986 car — including advice on finding out the dealer's cost, avoiding unwanted expensive extras, and steering clear of bait-and-switch techniques — the *Eagle-Beacon* reacted to wounded cries (and cancelled ads) from fuming dealers with a placating follow-up on October 18. "The story . . . was not supposed to appear in our newspaper because it is . . . unfair," executive editor David Merritt, Jr., was quoted as saying in the twenty-four paragraph piece. "We regret the error in communication that allowed this version to be printed."

Dart: to *The Des Moines Register*, for being an overeager beaver and giving away all the answers to a twenty-question quiz devised by the Webster City Library to commemorate Iowa History Month. The front-page article appeared on October 21, ten days before the contest was scheduled to close and the winners (of bookstore gift certificates) were to be announced.

Dart: to David Starr, publisher of the *Morning Union*, *Evening News*, and *Sunday Republican* in Springfield, Massachusetts, for putting politics above professionalism and chairing a testimonial fundraising dinner for U.S. congressman Edward P. Boland, who represents the paper's district. Might not his role in the \$100-a-plate event deter his re-

the most notable of American governmental experiments in our lifetime."

Those were Puerto Rico's days in the sun. Brightest was the light on Luis Muñoz Marín, who crafted the commonwealth pact, served as governor from 1948 to 1964, and was a key figure in Latin America's anticommunist democratic left. Operation Bootstrap bolstered the island's status as a showcase for U.S.-sponsored development. Puerto Rico's standard of living rose from the Caribbean's lowest to its highest — and the U.S. press was there to document this. Nothing attracts attention like an economic miracle, especially when it reflects U.S. policy goals.

But few journalists were around in the 1970s to watch as the oil crisis and the subsequent recession exposed the weak foundations of the island's economy. By then, media attention had shifted from Latin America to the Mideast and Southeast Asia. A Puerto Rican stringer for a mainland paper recalls: "I could have called my editor and told him that the island was sinking into the ocean, that I was standing on its highest point, and the water was up to my knees. He'd have said, 'Call back when it's up to your neck.'"

Now, thanks to civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua,

the State Department and the news media once again have their eyes on the Caribbean. But not, apparently, on Puerto Rico. There, ironically, the president's much-touted Caribbean Basin Initiative, designed to shore up the region's struggling island economies, has had a devastating effect by ending Puerto Rico's exclusive duty-free access to U.S. markets. Furthermore, federal budget cuts have had an especially harsh impact on the island, where 20 percent are unemployed and nearly 44 percent rely on food assistance.

Interestingly, while the U.S. press is busy covering other, presumably more important, stories, the European press dotes on Puerto Rico. The perception there, especially on the left, is that Puerto Rico is America's colonial problem. Colony or not, Puerto Rico is an expensive piece of real estate, costing the U.S. treasury more than \$4 billion a year. That's \$11 million a day in taxpayers' dollars — the same amount the Soviet Union spends to support Castro's Cuba. This statistic alone should make editors sit up and take notice.

LEE KRAVITZ

Lee Kravitz is a free-lance writer who often writes about the Caribbean.

porters from writing critical stories about Boland, a reporter for the weekly *Springfield Valley Advocate* asked Starr. "I don't know what there would be to criticize about Mr. Boland," the publisher replied.

Dart: to the *Los Angeles Daily News*, for editorial pettiness. In its November 17 reprint of *Sacramento Bee* columnist Dan Walters's appreciative piece on the increasingly aggressive coverage of California's political establishment by the capitol press corps, the *News* managed to include examples drawn by Walters from such news organizations as the *San Jose Mercury-News*, the *Oakland Tribune*, TV stations KRON in San Francisco and KCRA in Sacramento, as well as his own *Sacramento Bee* — but the *News* apparently could not find space for Walters's first and foremost citation: the exposure of a scandal involving fireworks tycoon W. Patrick Moriarty, then awaiting sentencing for influence-peddling in the state. That scandal, Walters had written in his original piece, had been "laid out in excruciating detail" by the *Orange County Register* and the *Los Angeles Times*, both of which, of course, are competitors of the *News*.

Laurel: to *The Seattle Times*, for keeping its priorities straight and refusing to promise in advance a story that would publicize a \$10,000 gift by local car dealer Bill Wright to the paper's holiday fund for the needy. (Shortly thereafter, on November 14, a page-one story, with photo, appeared in the rival *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, in which it was reported that its Readers Care Action Fund had just received \$10,000 from Wright.)

Dart: to *USA Today*, for its incorrigible habit (see Darts and Laurels, September/October 1985) of touting inside ads

on the paper's front page. The latest boldfaced entry in its November 7 Newsline ("A Quick Read on the News"): "SPECIAL AD REPORT: Chrysler's new Plymouth — 'The Pride is Back.' 6-9A."

Laurel: to the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, for a meaty October 29 story by business reporter Neal Koch documenting the widespread practice of shortweighting and overcharging by local supermarkets. The piece produced a call for official investigation by the county board of supervisors — and the cancellation of a \$250,000 advertising contract with the paper by Ralphs, one of the largest supermarket chains in the area. The story, by the way, was picked up by a number of local news organizations, with the conspicuous exception of the *Los Angeles Times*.

Laurel: to G. B. Trudeau, for a stinging summer Doonesbury series satirizing a Palm Beach ordinance requiring hired help to be fingerprinted by police and to carry I.D. cards. When embarrassed Florida legislators reconvened last fall they hastily enacted a statewide ban against any such version of the Pretoria-like law.

Dart: to *The New York Times*, for a singularly unnewsworthy stand-alone photo item in the October 30 news section showing then-national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane displaying an oversized photograph of his daughter from the window of his White House office. Miss McFarlane, the caption under the exclusive *Times* photo advised, is "a 21-year-old drama major at Northwestern University" and "an aspiring model." Readers were further advised that, according to her father, Miss McFarlane is, among other things, "hardworking," "talented," "sensitive," and "kind." ■



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Radical changes are needed, the author argues,
to protect the system's mandated independence

by JOHN WICKLEIN

Are you really contemplating abandonment of The Lawmakers? I know not what course others may take . . . but I shall find it difficult to stay the course of my heretofore strong support of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting if the Corporation . . . effectively denies to the public this excellent view of what their Congress is doing.

Representative Andy Jacobs, Jr., in a letter to Edward J. Pfister, then president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, December 1, 1982.

Why was the congressman exercised? Because he and 534 other lawmakers who control federal appropriations for public broadcasting know what they like. They like a program that presents favorable profiles of their leaders, shows members making ringing speeches on the floor of the House and Senate, and presents soft features about their stewardship in carrying out the public's will. WETA, the public television station in Washington, gave them that program in 1982. The series was called *The Lawmakers*, and Congress thought it was won-

derful. The public, which did not, tuned out. Public stations around the country dropped the program or buried it in their schedules. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which had provided money for its airing nationally on Public Broadcasting Service, told WETA it could not justify continued funding.

The response on the Hill was swift and clear. Thirty-five members of Congress, including Tip O'Neill and George Bush, who as vice-president sits as president of the Senate, made phone calls and wrote letters to CPB, many with direct or implied threats to cut the corporation's appropriation if it did not restore the program's support. The pressure worked; *The Lawmakers* was kept on the air (see sidebar, page 28).

The Lawmakers affair was a classic instance of the application of political influence — bipartisan political influence — by powerful congressmen to see to it that they have ultimate control of content in the system. As a public television administrator commented, "It's the Golden Rule: them that's got the money makes the rule." In attempting to control content, the senators and representatives have violated the basic principle for federal funding established in the 1967 Act that created the corporation. Responding to a recommendation of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, Congress set up CPB as an independent, private entity and directed it to "carry out its purposes . . . in ways that will most effectively assure the most freedom on noncommercial educational television and radio broadcast systems and local stations from interference with or

John Wicklein served in public broadcasting as news director of WNET in New York City from 1962 to 1964, as a public television bureau chief in Washington, D.C., for three years, and, most recently, as news and public affairs program officer for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. He left the CPB in 1984 to become director of the Kiplinger mid-career program at the Ohio State School of Journalism, in Columbus.

control of program content." Another provision, however, effectively undercut this intention. Rejecting a Carnegie Commission proposal that the system be financed by a 2 percent excise tax on television sets, Congress decided instead to provide money through annual appropriations.

Congress is by no means the only group that seems bent on undermining the independence of public broadcasting. A succession of administrations has also attempted to do so. Ronald Reagan has never concealed his antipathy toward the whole notion of an independent broadcasting system. His original plan was to kill it. *Broadcasting* magazine's head on a January 26, 1981, story summed up the incoming president's position nicely: "Reagan Transition's Verdict on CPB: Termination with Extreme Prejudice." Nixon was equally hostile. Believing that public broadcasting was in the hands of liberals, he first tried to kill federal funding for it; when that effort failed, he threatened to veto any appropriation bill if the system insisted on producing national public affairs programming.

Nixon was particularly outraged by the appointment in 1971 of two men he regarded as liberals — Sander Vanocur and Robert MacNeil (now co-host of *The MacNeill/Lehrer*

NewsHour) — to anchor a political program under the auspices of the National Public Affairs Center for Television in Washington. He ordered his staff to see to it that "all funds for public broadcasting be cut immediately," according to Nixon administration papers released in 1979 in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. Clay Whitehead, who as head of Nixon's Office of Telecommunications Policy had been leading the attack, told him that this would not fly, politically. But there was another route: under the 1967 Act, the president appoints all CPB board members. An internal White House memo showed how this could be put to political use: "The President's basic objective [is]: to get the left-wing commentators who are cutting us up off public television at once, indeed yesterday if possible. We need eight loyalists to control the present CPB board and fire the current staff who make the grants."

By 1972, Nixon had brought that off. The new board voted to discontinue funding "the networking of news, news analysis, and political commentary," and rescinded a staff commitment for multi-year funding of the National Public Affairs Center for Television. Nixon had won a major vic-

The lawmakers and *The Lawmakers*

The Lawmakers, a weekly series of half-hour television programs produced by station WETA in Washington, was originally funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1981. The intent was to provide strong, enterprise reporting on congressional activities that would be "in accordance with the highest standards of journalism," in the words of the CPB contract. Shortly after the series began to air in the fall of 1981, PBS stations complained that the series featured puff pieces on members of Congress and that no one was watching. Six public affairs specialists, convened by CPB as a review panel, agreed that the program did not fulfill its mandate to dig underneath the surface of the actions of Congress. One panelist commented that it seemed to be aimed at an audience of 535 senators and representatives. By a vote of four to two, the panel advised CPB not to re-fund the program.

Lewis Freedman, the funding official, wrote CPB president Edward J. Pfister: "I'm ready to give WETA the . . . decision not to renew *The Lawmakers*, and I think you should be forewarned that there probably will be hell to pay." He was right.

Paul Duke, the program's anchor, asked friends on the Hill to write letters and make phone calls to Pfister to save the program. About thirty-five did so; some linked their support of CPB's appropriation to renewal of the series. The House Appropriations Committee, reporting on the CPB funding bill, stated: "Programs like *The Lawmakers* . . . represent programming that serves the public well, and the committee encourages the corporation to continue its efforts in this regard."

Ward Chamberlin, WETA's president, got behind the campaign. In a letter to CPB dated August 2, 1982, he

wrote: "*The Lawmakers* has been and will be extremely important to CPB and to public television in their relationships with the men and women in the Congress. . . . I state this carefully for obvious reasons." Ron Hull, who by this time had succeeded Freedman as director of CPB's Program Fund, wrote to Pfister: "To be influenced by the pressure and the tactics employed simply sends out a signal to everyone that those tactics work. . . . I feel that our integrity is at stake. . . ." Hull told Chamberlin he suspected that the "promo" for *The Lawmakers* in the committee report had been a plant. Chamberlin denied this, in writing:

The Lawmakers' staff is, of course, in daily contact with many people on the Hill and in their enthusiasm may have overstepped their proper role. As far as I can find out, the language in the Committee's report was a complete surprise to all of us . . . I hope you won't be put off because there has been what seems like direct pressure. For better or worse, that's the name of the game in this town and public television is no exception.

When Hull told WETA in October 1982 that funds could not be made available "at this time," congressional pressure increased. Representative Stephen J. Solarz of New York wrote Chamberlin, with a copy to Pfister:

Any attempt to remove the program from the air would fly in the face of Congressional intent, both with respect to recent actions by Congress to increase funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and specifically regarding *The Lawmakers*. . . . There were some in the House who believed that, by mentioning *The Lawmakers*, the [Appropriations] Committee was engaging in precisely the kind of government interference for which President Nixon was criticized. However, I, along with a majority of my colleagues believed that . . . special mention was not only deserved but necessary.

tory: strong public affairs programming was not to surface again until well after he was driven from office by Watergate.

After Nixon, the Ford administration was quiescent toward public broadcasting, while Jimmy Carter, who supported its goals, proposed raising its appropriation. In presenting this proposal to Congress, he stated that public broadcasting must be protected against political interference. When push came to shove, however, the Carter administration tried to block a program it did not like. The program was "Death of a Princess." Co-produced by WGBH in Boston and scheduled to air in May 1980, it told of the beheading in 1977 of a princess in Saudi Arabia for having openly had an affair with a commoner. The Saudis protested vehemently to its being aired; Warren M. Christopher, acting secretary of state, forwarded the protest to Larry Grossman, then head of PBS. In a covering letter, Christopher asked Grossman to show "programming judgment" and, by implication, suggested that the program be canceled. The Mobil Corporation, a major underwriter of PBS, also brought pressure to bear. After wavering, Grossman decided that the program would be aired.

In February 1983, Pfister's behavior suggested that the pressure was getting to him. In the course of testifying in support of CPB funding, he assured the House Appropriations Committee that further funding for the series would be made available later in the year. Hull, persuaded by Pfister, committed \$200,000 to keep the program alive, but only through the rest of 1983.

Early in 1984 the National Association of Public Television Stations, public television's lobby group on the Hill, stepped in. NAPTS was, of course, eager to have the CPB continue funding a series that Congress found so much to its liking. Accordingly, it suggested that another review panel might be put together, and Bruce Christensen, then-president of the lobbying group, provided Hull with a list of candidates for the new panel. In February 1984 this panel came up with a favorable review. Hull then announced that the CPB would provide \$225,000 to keep the program going until June of that year.

When that money ran out, Tip O'Neill put in a call to CPB president Pfister. Pfister, miffed by what he regarded as an overt attempt to pressure the corporation, did not return the call, asking his legal counsel to respond instead. This infuriated O'Neill and others in the House who saw it as a snub. House Appropriations Committee staff members told a CPB representative that the corporation's supplemental appropriation was in jeopardy, but that the bill would go forward if the program was continued. In July, after learning that the CPB had failed to provide further funding for *The Lawmakers*, the committee cut \$12.5 million from the supplemental appropriation.

Panic set in among the public television establishment. Program Fund director Hull offered \$300,000 as a stopgap

like the Nixon administration, but far more successfully, the Reagan administration has resorted to various stratagems designed to kill, gut, or otherwise drastically alter the nature of public broadcasting. The manner in which public broadcasting has been buffeted by Reagan over the past five years provides a clear demonstration that, if public broadcasting is to maintain the independence envisioned for it by its founders, new methods of financing and administering the system are required.

The first budget drawn up by David Stockman had zero funds in it for public broadcasting; his fallback position called for phasing out all federal funding in five years. The Reagan argument was that, if people want public broadcast programming, they should pay for it, in the same way they pay for Home Box Office, for example. (This would mean, of course, that people who cannot pay would not see and hear news, public affairs, and cultural programming that may give them a perspective other than the pap normally offered by marketplace programming.) In his first year in office, Reagan the landslide winner was able to get Congress, in an unprecedented action, to rescind \$35 million

courtesy WETA



Champions of *The Lawmakers*: House Speaker Tip O'Neill and the program's anchor, Paul Duke (right), both fought to keep the series on the air although viewers tuned out and a panel voted to cancel the show.

to keep *The Lawmakers* alive. On July 27, a group of station managers, hoping to placate Congress, announced that they would raise \$1 million from the stations for a replacement program that would cover Congress fifty-two weeks a year, and asked CPB to match that amount. Hull agreed, and "Son of *Lawmakers*" was conceived.

The name actually chosen for the new series was *Capitol Journal*. It is being produced for WETA by an independent production company headed by Hodding Carter and Christopher Koch, with Carter as anchor. The series, which began to air last March, offers more enterprise reporting than its predecessor and no one has accused it of being a sop for an audience of 535. If its funds run dry, will Congress love this program as truly as it loved *The Lawmakers*? The public television establishment is holding its breath. J.W.

of the \$172 million already appropriated for public broadcasting for 1983. That forced CPB to cut community service grants to the stations by 20 percent. As a result, two smaller stations went under, and several large ones nearly did. On the Hill, the talk was that the administration hoped more would fail so that their licenses could be taken over by commercial stations.

Failing in 1981 and 1982 to persuade Congress to knock out *all* federal funding, Reagan took another tack: convert public broadcasting into a commercial system whose pro-

courtesy CPB



CPB president Edward J. Pfister (left) resigned last May after the Reagan majority on his board voted down a marketing trip to the Soviet Union.

gramming would be based on marketplace values. Reagan officials inspired a bill to permit an eighteen-month pilot program in which ten public television and ten public radio stations would broadcast commercials.

William McCarter, president of WTTW in Chicago, and Jay Iselin, president of WNET in New York, were converted to the idea. McCarter said he wanted WTTW to be a commercial station that continued to broadcast public television fare; Iselin said he thought ads were "inevitable." The presidents of both PBS and CPB, however, were adamantly opposed to advertising. The executive committee of the National Association of Public Television Stations argued that public broadcasting should continue to be an educational medium that is supported by the people who use it, and also by the federal government. "Any attempt to inject commercial advertising into the mix," the committee declared, "would change the flavor, purpose, and intent of public broadcasting as it exists today."

A Temporary Commission on Alternative Funding, cre-

ated by Congress at the administration's urging, reported after a two-year study that limited advertising was unlikely to produce enough revenue to replace federal funding. Dissatisfied with the report, Reagan continued to push the system to support itself commercially. He twice vetoed CPB appropriations in 1984. Then, taking a leaf from Nixon's book, he appointed several of his supporters to the CPB board in the expectation that they would bring its programming in line with his thinking. (That Reagan should borrow this tactic from Nixon was not surprising. After all, Pat Buchanan, one of the chief architects of the Nixon plan to subvert public broadcasting, is now Reagan's director of communications.)

Before Reagan came in, the board majority appointed by Carter had voted in 1979 to take themselves out of program-by-program decision-making. To do this, they set up an independent Program Fund with about \$25 million a year to commission national programming in news, public affairs, and cultural areas. The fund's charter stated that it was to be "protected from outside influences" — specifically including board members — "in selecting programs." Thus, CPB, designed as a "heat shield" (the phrase used in the original Carnegie Commission report) against outside pressures on programming, had installed a second layer of insulation.

In its first couple of years, the Program Fund operated without feeling the presence of the board. It commissioned a ten-part documentary series, called *Crisis* to *Crisis*, in which independent producers investigated controversial issues. Eight out of the ten documentaries won national or international awards. It established *Frontline*, an award-winning weekly series of news documentaries supervised by David Fanning at WGBH in Boston, now in its fourth season. It provided initial funding for the *Inside Story* series, which has won four Emmys for its critiques of journalism. And, through an "open-solicitation" process in which the Program Fund's officers ask for proposals from independent producers and producers at member stations, the fund has selected and financed fifteen to eighteen hour-long documentaries each year, to be shown as PBS specials. (By contrast, the networks have steadily decreased the number of documentaries they produce.)

A charter ignored — and an activist board

With a Reagan majority now in control of the board, the concept that members should not meddle with program decisions has been eroded. One Reagan appointee, R. Kenneth Towery, a former deputy director of the United States Information Agency, said at a board meeting that the Program Fund should not give another cent to *Frontline*. Another, Richard Brookhiser, a senior editor at *National Review*, objected to PBS's airing of *Concealed Enemies*, a docudrama on the Alger Hiss case, because the show left "an agnosticism" about whether Hiss had, in fact, been guilty of spying for the Russians.

Sonia Landau, board chairman and head of Women for Reagan/Bush in the 1984 campaign, has also made her views clear on what sort of programs the fund should support. Last January, ignoring the board's own written policy, she



'If we are going to be opening the doors to wonderful Soviet ideas on their history,' said Richard Brookhiser, a Reagan appointee to the board, 'that is just disastrous'

sat in on an open-solicitation review panel. She said she thought the fund should be used for more historical public affairs programming, such as a series explaining the Constitution. Several panelists and staff members felt that both her presence and her comments violated the principle of insulation set forth in the fund's charter.

In a recent telephone interview, Landau said, "I see nothing wrong with expressing my views at a panel meeting. If we [the board] are going to use taxpayers' dollars, we should have an opinion on programs and know what they are putting on. [But] the Program Fund director makes up his own mind."

A regional public television administrator pointed out, however, that since the board hires and fires the director he is likely to pay *some* attention when Landau intervenes as she did at the review panel meeting. "Sonia has to come to terms with the fact that, in such a case, she's a two-thousand-pound canary," this administrator said.

In any event, Ron Hull, the current Program Fund director, told a meeting of San Francisco Bay Area independent producers that he agreed with Landau "one hundred percent." He said he favored "the education model" for CPB and thought it should do more programming in history, including the Constitution. The independents took this to mean that, from now on, the Program Fund would shy away from controversial public affairs documentaries. Because PBS is one of the few remaining outlets for this kind of documentary, independent producers fear that they will no longer be able to place their work on national television.

System officials who deal on a regular basis with the Program Fund say that this change in funding priorities is less the result of direct edicts from the board than it is a result of trying to read the board's mind.

This mind-set became crystal clear at a May 15, 1985, board meeting at which Landau and other pro-Reagan board members voted to cancel a marketing trip to the Soviet

Union which the CPB International Affairs Department had organized as one of a series by station executives who hoped to sell and exchange programs in other countries. Reading the transcript of that meeting is like reading a tract by right-wing ideologues. The marketing project had been cleared by the State Department. But Reagan appointees Brookhiser, Towery, and Howard Gutin let it be known that they looked on this as trading with the enemy. "If we are going to be opening the doors to wonderful Soviet ideas on their history or something, that is just disastrous," said Brookhiser. Landau commented: "I am concerned that an institution that operates on federal money is dealing with the Soviet government."

CPB president Edward J. Pfister was put in the bizarre position of having to explain to Landau and the Reagan majority on his board that CPB "is a public broadcasting entity; it is not a government agency." The next day, in the wake of the six to four vote to cancel the trip, Pfister resigned. He said that political motives had influenced the vote and that it represented an "encroachment on the independence of the corporation." Landau, informed by *The Washington Post* that critics had charged her with moving CPB to the right, retorted: "From where? To the right of George McGovern? Yeah, you're right." She denied, however, that the vote had anything to do with politics.

Interviewed more recently, Landau asserted that the board was *not* taking orders from the Reagan administration and that the CPB had *never* been subjected to pressure from Congress on programming. "In fact," she said, "it's been quite extraordinary. They may buck a few letters to us from their constituents but that's the extent of it." She added, however, that the board is part of "the body politic." The kind of thinking exhibited by the board does not reassure producers who want to do investigative stories on public

CPB board chairman Sonia Landau thinks the Program Fund should be used for historical public affairs programming, such as a series explaining the Constitution



CJR/Harvey Wang

television — many of whom left commercial broadcast news operations because they had not been permitted to dig into controversial subjects.

A willingness to defer to the board's pro-Reagan majority is not the only reason viewers are less likely to see strong news and public affairs programming on their local stations. Another is that local boards are often composed of fat cats appointed for their fund-raising skills or their ability to contribute funds themselves or, on the other hand, of politicians foisted on them by state officials. These board members don't like the heat good reporting can generate. Moreover, as often as not, they show little understanding of the mission of public broadcasting. In more than one instance, the anchor of a local public affairs program has been replaced because a board member did not like his politics; and many station managers tell of instances in which a board member has insisted on reviewing a program before it aired, then asked the manager to pull it from the schedule.

To address this problem, a group of station managers last year organized the Wingspread Conference on Editorial Integrity. "It's an ethical issue," says Virginia Fox, president of the Southern Educational Communications Association and the leader of the conference. "We've got to insulate editorial integrity regardless of the source. We've got to

reduce undue influence, whether it's a 'Friends' [of the station] group, or a politician, or AT and T. We came to see the boards as the cure."

The group's statement of principles, which members of the conference are working to get boards across the country to adopt, begins: "We are trustees of a public service." As such, board members pledge to create a climate in which station management can "responsibly exercise the editorial freedom necessary to achieve public broadcasting's mission effectively."

Enter, bearing money, the big corporations

As presently financed and administered, public broadcasting is vulnerable not only to political pressure but also to pressure from large corporations. Corporate underwriters now select many of PBS's prime-time programs. *Great Performances* segments are picked by programmers at Exxon; *Masterpiece Theatre* mini-series are picked by programmers at the Mobil Corporation. Corporations rarely fund enterprising news programs or investigative documentaries because the ideas expressed might run counter to their commercial interests. The exceptions are safe public affairs programs such as *The MacNeill/Lehrer NewsHour*. AT&T chose to sponsor "the nation's first hour-long news program" be-

National news: public TV and the NPR example

Insulating public television from political and commercial influence will not in itself solve the problems faced by public television journalists who would like to present coherent and comprehensive news coverage as an alternative to the commercial news product. Another obstacle is the byzantine structure set up to handle news and public affairs. As things stand, news is fed into PBS by a dozen different producing organizations, whenever they can scrounge the money to pay for producing such news.

For example: When a crisis like the *Achille Lauro* hijacking hits, the public affairs director of PBS (the scheduler) asks the public affairs director of CPB (the funder) if any money is available; calling on local-station or independent producers, he then tries to put together, for a program to be aired that same night, a news operation that will make sense out of what has happened. This often fails, and no wonder: it is an insane way to program news. *MacNeill/Lehrer* will not turn itself around to produce such special events coverage; it goes its own way as a public affairs program basically uninterested in this kind of reporting.

The idea of a national news operation is supported by Barry Chase, PBS vice-president of public affairs programming. "The operation has to be more centralized, with more freedom for good people to take the right kinds of risks," Chase argues. "You decide someone will be the executive in charge of this and, if he messes up enough, you fire him."

Up to now, public television station managers have refused to take these risks. But until a national news staff with power to make editorial judgments is in place, news

on public television will be done ad hoc, with predictable results.

National Public Radio, on the other hand, has done the very thing needed: it has organized a news staff in Washington to produce worldwide news coverage and analysis. It transmits its coverage, primarily through *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*, via a national satellite interconnection. These daily programs provide by far the best broadcast journalism in the country — because they are dedicated to imaginative, enterprise reporting.

NPR was able to build this operation with CPB funds because radio does not draw the attention that TV does. Richard Nixon, who mounted a frontal attack on public television, did not think that public radio had the same clout, so he left it alone.

Still, NPR today has its detractors of the right. Its programming, the Heritage Foundation said in a recent report, is "tasteless at best, and at worse, biased" toward the left. Asked about that, NPR news director Robert Siegel insists that "we are in the mainstream of American journalism." Siegel points out that, with *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*, which together reach more than five million listeners each week, NPR has become "the national radio news operation," in contrast to the commercial radio networks, which provide little more than news-on-the-hour headline services.

Many of the 304 member stations build local news programs of their own around the NPR programs. If public television had a national news operation, PBS stations could use the same idea. Not only would it build audiences, but it

cause this would help to position it, in the public's mind, for its planned emergence as electronic information provider to the nation. All AT&T had to do was dangle \$10 million in front of station managers' eyes at the 1982 public television Program Fair, and they immediately saw the need, not felt before, to extend *MacNeill/Lehrer* to an hour.

In the scramble for corporate dollars, PBS and the public stations have tossed their former conflict-of-interest standards concerning underwriting out the window. Now we have "enhanced underwriting," with credits that are often blatant plugs. And we find ads such as one in *TV Guide* promoting *Air Force One*, a documentary that the ad said was "sponsored by" (not "underwritten by") the Boeing Company, which manufactures *Air Force One*.

Many programmers and producers in the system say that the tendency today is to shape content to suit the purposes of potential corporate underwriters. In the words of one independent producer, "It's getting so that you have to pitch programs to corporate underwriters in the same terms you pitch shows to commercial sponsors."

High Tech Times, a series about consumer electronics that was originally supported by an insurance company, was later pitched to an industry group promoting products directly related to the series's content. Its host, former FCC

would also give their viewers a sense that the stations were involved in community affairs. In Boston, WGBH has developed community loyalty through the services it provides with its nightly news program. But few public television stations now are willing to take the chance. Station managers typically complain that news costs too much. They are more interested in upscale cultural programs sent down the line by PBS. These take no effort to mount, and they attract the contributions that pay the managers' salaries.

Which brings us to a major change that has taken place in public broadcasting in recent years. When the institution was young, producers and managers saw their role as providing a public service to their communities. Although salaries were low, they felt they were not working primarily for money but rather to contribute to the public good.

In an era of the "Material Girl in a Material World," that idea has largely gone out of style. A remark commonly heard from program managers on CPB panels evaluating public affairs series is, "That doesn't do anything for me — I get only a one point two [percent of the number of TV households in the country] rating on that." They would rather program an entertainment series that "gives" them a 1.8 — even though, by the rating services' own definition, this fractional point spread is well within the margin of error.

Nevertheless, the prevailing attitude is: "Bigger audiences bring bigger bucks, so let's go for it." This leads logically to programming re-runs of *Father Knows Best*. When that happens, it is a good sign that the station has put aside service to its community through news and public affairs, and gone for the bucks.

J.W.

Program Fund director Ron Hull, like chairman Landau, believes CPB should do more educational programming — which independent programmers read as meaning an end to controversial public affairs documentaries



commissioner Nicholas Johnson, objected to the change. "There is an inherent conflict of interest," he said recently, "in having a program on consumer electronics underwritten by something called the Consumer Electronics Group of the Electronics Industry Association." Johnson, who has since parted company with the producers (WHA-TV in Madison, Wisconsin), says that the same criticism can be applied to any program in which the underwriter has a clear economic interest in the way the subject matter is presented — "say, for example, a brokerage firm underwriting a show about the stock market." Louis Rukeyser's *Wall Street Week*, one of the most popular programs in the PBS schedule, is underwritten by Prudential-Bache Securities.

None of this commercialism, of course, is conducive to program independence. Despite that fact, no one in the top leadership is trying to change the system fundamentally. "I don't see a great need to tinker," says Bruce Christensen, president of PBS. He would, however, like to see a program endowment of up to \$1 billion created from private sources, as a counterbalance to federal funding. Peter Fannon, president of the National Association of Public Television Stations, says he thinks the present sum of many parts works quite well. But, he adds, it must develop many sources of funding to keep control away from one entity. Landau of CPB says, "I don't feel it has to be changed at all."

These attitudes differ sharply from those of public television journalists, who often have to be creatively subversive to get around the system and do good work. For them, this is no way to run a railroad.

How the system's integrity could be saved

At best, the funding system established by Congress encourages timidity in programming; at worst, it invites political and commercial interference. If we want a public broadcasting service whose news and documentary pro-



'We've got to insulate editorial integrity regardless of the source,' says Virginia Fox, president of the Southern Educational Communications Association. 'We've got to reduce undue influence'

grams provide a real alternative to what the networks have to offer, there must be a radical overhauling of the way public broadcasting is financed and administered.

What form would a reorganization have to take to guarantee the system's independence? One thing is certain: it cannot be "the BBC solution" often proposed by people not familiar with public broadcasting in the U.S. The BBC has some good arrangements that *could* be used here — production and scheduling of news and public affairs programs are done through the same organization, and the BBC has a guaranteed and insulated source of programming funds, through license fees on television and radio sets. But it is a *national* system, without independent local affiliates. The intent in this country was to establish independent local stations, and this must be kept in mind in any reorganization.

First and foremost, Congress and the administration must agree to take funding out of the politics of direct appropriations. To do this, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting must be abolished. In its place, Congress could establish an Independent Public Broadcasting Authority, supported by a 2 percent tax on the profits of commercial broadcasting companies. These broadcasters have been given the use of the public airways — free — to produce those profits, estimated at \$21.3 billion for 1983. Such a tax, bringing in more than \$400 million a year, would end the need for direct appropriations, greatly reduce the need for corporate underwriting, and provide the funds necessary for a first-rate national program service.

With public broadcasting costs now running nearly \$1 billion a year, local station operations would still have to be financed from state funds and subscriber contributions. Today, support for the system breaks down to: federal funds, 16 percent; state funds, 29 percent; business underwriting, 16 percent; private contributions, 23 percent; and the rest from a variety of sources. The federal appropriation for 1986 is \$159.5 million.

Funding from a 2 percent tax on commercial broadcasters would bring to about \$5 per person the amount provided

for public broadcasting from all sources each year in the U.S. By way of comparison, Canada provides \$25; the United Kingdom, \$18; and New Zealand, \$38 per person.

In return for this tax, commercial broadcasters could be released from their present legal obligation to serve the public interest in their programming, allowing them to concentrate entirely on programs that maximize profit. Henry Geller, director of the Washington Center for Public Policy Research, suggests that, since the commercial broadcasters would benefit financially from this arrangement, they should be willing to give up a small share of their earnings to support a nonprofit system devoted to public interest programming. This would be especially appropriate if the public stations agreed, as an added inducement, to abandon the idea of selling commercials on their own.

An Independent Public Broadcasting Authority could use its funds in two ways: 50 percent could be given as a straight pass-through to the stations for their own program productions and acquisitions. And 50 percent could be allocated to national programs produced and acquired by the authority's program staff.

Rather than develop a single take-it-or-leave-it network in the commercial mold, the staff could program a multi-channel service via the authority's satellite interconnection. This would have a core service of news, public affairs, and cultural programs that could be promoted and advertised nationally, plus several other services for the stations and for public cable channel operations. One of these could be devoted to the work of independent producers — in the last decade, independents have provided most of the exciting fare in news and public affairs documentaries.

A multi-channel service could also be provided for public radio programming. One channel, centering on *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*, could provide the first national all-news radio service.

To take the authority out of the politics of presidential appointments, it could be run by a director selected by a search committee of nongovernment leaders in journalism, the arts, education, business, labor, and so on. Policy could be set, not by a board of political chit-holders, but by the director as chairperson of a panel that would include one representative of PBS, one from NPR, one elected by independent producer groups, and one elected by the stations' existing community advisory boards.

Naysayers to complete reorganization are right in saying that political and system opposition to this is formidable — but wrong in saying it cannot be overcome. It can't happen, obviously, under the Reagan administration, which is actively hostile. And public broadcasting has no champions now in Congress; they would have to be encouraged to come forward or be elected. But an administration — possibly even the next one — that is more dedicated to the public interest in communications *could* provide the climate, and the drive, required to overhaul the system. Progressive forces inside public broadcasting and media reform groups should be forming a national coalition now to draft a plan to be put into action as soon as the time is ripe. ■

Libel insurance: scrambling for coverage

Rates are soaring —
and tough reporting
can double the price

by MICHAEL MASSING

Do you consider yourself an expert on the ills afflicting American journalism? If so, here's a pop quiz: What do Bhopal, asbestosis, toxic waste, airplane crashes, and errant satellites have to do with the First Amendment?

The answer: all have cost the insurance industry a bundle. That, in turn, has jacked up the price for all kinds of coverage, including libel insurance. Especially libel insurance. In addition to everything else, the Sharon and Westmoreland cases have made insurance companies skittish about underwriting libel. Premiums have skyrocketed. Publications have had to scramble for coverage. And, in a development that has

profound implications, news executives are feeling unprecedented pressure to settle suits. All of which is unwelcome news to a profession already cowed by libel. "There is a direct relation between affordable, comprehensive insurance and the willingness of journalists to take risks," says Robert Sack, a New York media lawyer whose clients include *The Wall Street Journal*.

Jim Mullin would no doubt agree. He

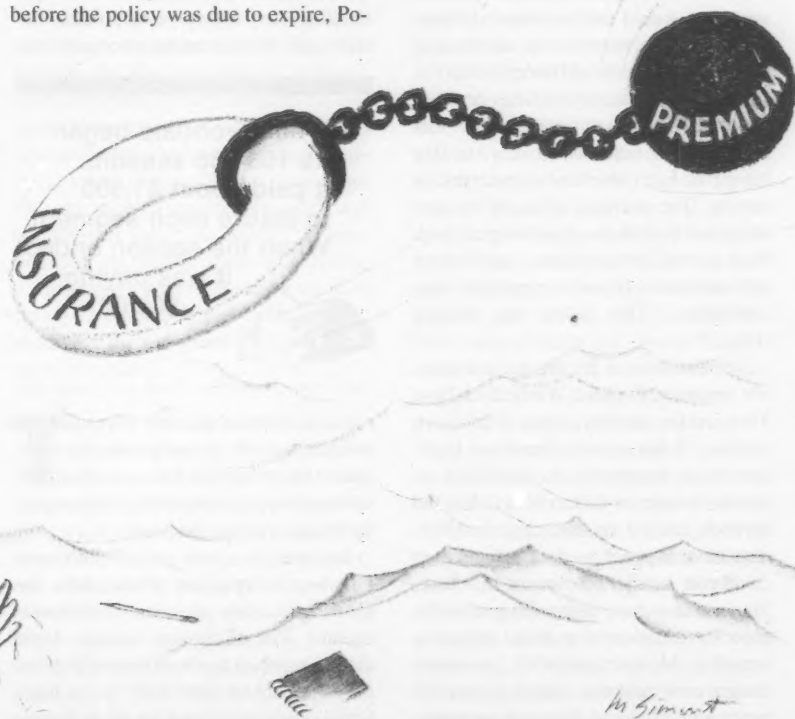
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is the editor of the *San Diego Reader*, an alternative weekly with a circulation of 115,000. Through last summer, the *Reader* had a comfortable policy with the Potomac Insurance Company. It had a premium of \$1,240 and a deductible (the amount the publication pays before the insurance company takes over) of \$1,500. Last April, however, six weeks before the policy was due to expire, Po-

tomac informed the *Reader* that its contract would not be renewed. Mullin telephoned the company to plead his case, but Potomac was adamant. The company was shedding all accounts "with a poor loss ratio," it wrote, and the *Reader* was a prime candidate.

The *Reader* approached three or four other insurers, without success. Then, three days before the deadline, a San Diego insurance broker called to say she had located a willing carrier. The price was steep — a premium of \$5,000 and a deductible of \$10,000 — but, with time slipping away, the *Reader* hurriedly sent a check to the company. Two days later, however, the broker called back to say that the carrier had changed its mind — it now wanted a \$10,230 premium with a \$20,000 deductible. Mullin says he was "stunned" by the price but, since the *Reader* had just come out with some

Michael Massing is a contributing editor of the Review. This article was funded by the Saul and Janice Poliak Center for the Study of First Amendment Issues and by the Delacorte Center for Magazine Journalism, both at Columbia University.



controversial stories, he felt he had no choice. "For us, ten thousand dollars is a lot of money," says Mullin. "It just about wiped out our cushion." He has since concluded that "the threat of a lawsuit is more serious than actually losing a lawsuit. If we get hit by another suit, where are we going to get insurance?"

It's a question that is being heard with increasing frequency. Consider the following examples:

□ Radio station WKZQ in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was told last year that its premium of \$1,200 was going to be raised to more than \$6,000. The station eventually arranged a more affordable policy through the National Association of Broadcasters. Even then, the price came to \$2,400 — a 100 percent rise in one year.

□ When *Frontline*, the Public Broadcasting Service's public affairs series, began its 1984-1985 season in October 1984, it paid about \$1,500 to insure each segment. By last January, the price had risen to \$3,000. When the season ended in May 1985, *Frontline* was paying \$6,200 per production — a fourfold increase in the course of a single season.

□ Three months before its policy was due to expire last August, *The San Francisco Bay Guardian* was notified that its insurance would not be renewed. Over the following months the alternative weekly enlisted four different brokers to call around the country and inquire about coverage. The market was so tight that a new carrier was located only the day before the *Bay Guardian*'s former policy ran out. The prospect of losing its coverage had forced the paper to pull back from several investigations, says editor and publisher Bruce Brugmann, who concludes, "This is the real chilling effect."

Not everyone is feeling the pressure. For instance, Richard Winfield, a New York media attorney, says of his own clients, "I have encountered no problems [with insurance], no significant increases in rates or deductibles." But the numbers are not encouraging. In 1985, rates have as much as doubled and they could rise another 50 percent this year. The increases have been even greater for papers and stations that do investigative reporting. Most striking of all, one major insurer now requires clients to pay 20 percent of all legal fees and expenses

above the deductible — an unprecedented measure that indicates how radically the insurance game has changed.

Any analysis of the current crisis must begin with *Sharon v. Time* and *Westmoreland v. CBS*. *Time* paid an estimated \$1.5 million to defend itself; CBS, between \$6 million and \$10 million. More accurately, the CNA Insurance Companies paid those sums, since it had the misfortune to insure both companies. The great expense and visibility of the two trials helped convince CNA to stop underwriting libel as of January 1 of this year.

The fallout from *Sharon* and *Westmoreland* has extended far beyond CNA, however. "The legal fees in those two cases probably set a record for libel cases," says James Goodale, a media attorney with Debevoise & Plimpton in New York. "They have really wiped out the market for the rest of [the media]." To understand why, it's necessary to consider the current chaotic state of the insurance industry. In the wake of Union Carbide's Bhopal disaster, for instance, insurers have cancelled entire programs for some chemical companies. The recent spate of satellites lost in space cost the insurers about \$100 million for each satellite. And the surge in product liability and medical malpractice suits has

'When Frontline began its 1984-85 season, it paid about \$1,500 to insure each segment. When the season ended, it was paying \$6,200'



required massive payouts. Over the last five years, U.S. property-casualty companies have together lost more than \$55 billion, sharply diminishing their capacity to take on new business.

Imagine, then, how underwriters have felt about the epidemic of libel suits, the growing hostility of juries, the unprecedented size of damage awards. Most disturbing of all has been the willingness of judges to let libel suits go to trial. Legal expenses account for some 80 per-

cent of all libel expenditures and, as defense costs mount, insurance losses have ballooned. As a result, many companies are staying away from libel. Lloyd's of London, for instance, long a major libel insurer, has reportedly drawn up a lengthy list of media conglomerates it will no longer touch.

In fact, only three or four companies continue to offer coverage, and all are struggling to overcome accumulated losses. The Employers Reinsurance Corporation, which wrote the first libel policy ever, in the 1930s, feels so strapped that it will not even discuss its operations. Chairman Michael Fitt says only that recent losses are "absolutely decimating us," forcing the company to undertake an "in-depth study of . . . how we can write this business and make a profit." Another leading source of coverage, Media/Professional Insurance, Inc., has experienced a doubling of losses over the last five years. "It's been a slow snowball," says executive vice president Bill Bauer. "We didn't really see it coming." To help compensate, Media/Professional has increased its rates by 50 to 100 percent this year and plans another 50 percent increase in 1986; its minimum deductible has been raised from \$1,000 to \$2,500.

The future of libel insurance in America probably rests with the Mutual Insurance Company of Bermuda. Mutual insures more than 700 daily newspapers, including many big metropolitan ones. The company was founded in the early 1960s at the request of members of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. At the time, insurance policies covered only damage awards; the ANPA sought coverage for defense costs as well. Mutual was able to offer it, partly because of its offshore location, which afforded substantial tax and regulatory advantages. On paper, Mutual was run by thirteen directors, seven of them Bermudans; effective power, however, has rested with a board of advisers selected by the ANPA.

Until recently, Mutual sought to serve its clients by keeping its premiums low and deductibles modest. Procedures for reporting claims were lax, and news organizations were left to conduct their cases as they saw fit. In recent years, however, the bill, quite literally, came due. Cases that had wound their way

through the courts for six or seven years all seemed to end at once, requiring large payouts. At the same time, plummeting interest rates reduced the amount that Mutual could earn by investing its income from premiums. Suddenly the company's finances seemed shaky. In 1984, Mutual, which had long kept its books closed, sent a letter to policyholders setting out the grim statistics: over the past thirteen years, while receiving premiums totaling \$8.6 million, the company had paid out more than \$26 million in claims. Furthermore, no fewer than 1,700 cases remained outstanding. To help overcome such difficulties, Mutual announced that its clients would henceforth have to pay 20 percent of all legal fees and expenses above the deductible. They would also be required to report on the progress of their suits every six months.

"People have to come to realize that the free ride is over," says Arthur McKey, a partner in the Washington-based law firm of Hanson, O'Brien, Birney & Butler, which administers Mutual's affairs on a day-to-day basis. "If we're going to have viable libel insurance programs, we have to take a business approach to this." Mutual's clients have been slow to agree. Last April, at a national insurance conference in New Orleans, a Mutual representative met with skeptical newspaper risk managers, the people who arrange coverage for their companies. They demanded an explanation for Mutual's sudden decision to institute the 20-percent co-insurance clause. They also balked at the strict new reporting requirements, which they feared could create an avalanche of paperwork. The meeting was contentious, but it did help clear the air. In the months that followed, as Mutual's dire financial condition became clear, major publishers have willingly paid the higher premiums needed to keep the company afloat.

For instance, Knight-Ridder's premium almost doubled last year, with prospects of its doubling again in 1986. Even at such inflated rates, however, libel premiums do not cause the company much of a problem. It is rare for a news organization to spend more than \$500,000 a year on libel insurance — a relatively inconsequential sum for companies like Knight-Ridder, which takes

in \$2 billion a year. Jim Matthews, risk manager for Knight-Ridder, is more worried about soaring rates for other types of insurance: "I've encountered much more of a problem in insuring our holdings against earthquakes in California than in insuring against libel."

Smaller organizations have had a much harder time. The National News-

'If a small weekly does a lot of investigative reporting, we may not be able to insure it at all'



Bill Bauer,
executive vice-president,
Media/Professional
Insurance, Inc.

paper Association, which sponsors libel insurance for hundreds of dailies and weeklies, says rates for its subscribers have risen an average 85 percent in the last year alone. A typical case is *The Greeneville Sun*, which, with a circulation of 14,600, is the flagship of a seven-paper family-owned group in eastern Tennessee. Mutual informed the *Sun* that for 1985 the papers' premiums would rise by almost 50 percent and that they would have to pay 20 percent of all costs above the deductible. Feeling vulnerable, the *Sun* managed to arrange a more affordable policy through the National Newspaper Association. This year, however, the papers' premiums are going up 99 percent. Such a jump poses "a very serious problem for us," says co-publisher Gregg K. Jones. "It tends to impair the profit margin, slim as it is, of these small papers. Because we have strong resources, we're better able to withstand these increases. But it hurts very, very much."

The *Sun* is relatively lucky. Its newspaper group has never lost a suit, says Jones, and only one (current) case has gone so far as to require a lawyer. Papers with a longer libel record are paying for it. "In the past, our criterion for setting premiums was based entirely on circulation," says Mutual attorney Arthur McKey. "You could be sued fifty times and it made no difference." Now, however, with losses mounting, Mutual and other carriers are

taking past libel experience very much into account. And the key factor is not how many cases a paper has lost, but how many times it has exceeded its deductible.

From the insurers' standpoint, an even greater liability than being sued is being aggressive. "The problem right now is for anything that smacks of investigative reporting," says Ann Heavner of Johnson & Higgins, one of the nation's largest insurance brokerage firms. At Media/Professional, for instance, Bill Bauer notes that while the minimum deductible for small papers is now \$2,500, "for those that do investigative reporting it would be ten thousand dollars. If a small weekly newspaper does a lot of investigative reporting, we may not be able to insure it at all."

The Texas Observer, an Austin-based biweekly that aggressively covers Texas politics, has been sued only once since 1974, and the suit was dropped before the insurance deductible was exceeded. Nevertheless, a week before the *Observer's* policy was due to expire last July, Employers Reinsurance stated that its contract would not be renewed. The *Observer* was granted a month's extension, and in that time it frantically looked for a new carrier. It was unsuccessful, however, and for three months the publication had no coverage whatsoever.

The effect on the *Observer* was immediate. "It definitely had a chilling effect," says editor Geoffrey Rips. "We walked on eggshells the whole time." All copy was read doubly closely for offensive language, and the name of a litigious individual was deleted from one story. Finally, after three months of waiting, the *Observer* lined up a new policy. It came just in time, because the *Observer* was about to run several long investigative pieces. If the insurance gap had lasted much longer, Rips says, "it would have destroyed this magazine."

In broadcasting, independent producers in particular have suffered. Last year, for instance, *Frontline* was scheduled to air "Breaking the Bank," an analysis of the collapse of the Continental Illinois and Penn Square banks. First, however, producer Scott Craig had to find insurance. (In addition to carrying its own insurance, *Frontline* requires independents to obtain individual coverage.) Craig was turned down by the first four

or five carriers he approached before Media/Professional agreed to take him on. The coverage cost Craig \$5,000 — double what he had paid for his previous production the year before. As is standard, Craig must show his scripts to Media/Professional, and while he has not yet had to make any editorial changes, he predicts that “the days may be coming when the insurance companies are going to be our partners.”

For the moment, libel insurance remains a good buy for most news organizations. Today's premiums constitute a relatively small price to pay for the \$1 million, \$2 million, or \$10 million in coverage that most policies offer. Unfortunately, says Media/Professional's Bill Bauer, “It looks like things are going to get worse instead of better. Libel insurance has been cheap for so long. There's a lot of catching up to do.” If current trends continue, Bauer adds, libel insurance rates will soar as high as those for medical malpractice and other forms of professional liability. Already, major news organizations are finding it harder to obtain coverage for legal expenses, as opposed to awards. One alternative is self-insurance, by which a company pays all of its own libel expenses. *The New York Times* is one of a handful that self-insures, but other big companies may soon follow suit.

The most serious problems, perhaps, can be expected from Mutual's new co-insurance policy. On one level, of course, the 20-percent rule will have the benign effect of reducing legal expenses. News organizations are finally instituting stricter controls over the spendthrift ways of the law firms they use. *The New York Times*, for example, has notified outside firms that it will not pay for first-class air travel unless such arrangements are cleared in advance.

On a more profound level, though, the co-insurance regulation is going to weaken the control that publishers exercise over suits. For decades, major news organs have adhered to strict no-settlement policies. Such policies not only served to deter frivolous suits; they also enabled news organizations to proclaim themselves staunch defenders of the truth, no matter what the cost. Such a stance, however, rested on the comforting knowledge that the insurance car-

rier was footing the bill. Now that the newspaper itself will have to pay a share, the no-settlement stance is losing its luster. “Considering whether to settle a suit is something that was never discussed before,” says Ralph Gentry, risk manager for the Times Mirror Company. But, as a result of the new co-insurance policy, “it's something that's going to be discussed now. If there is an element of negligence or guilt on the part of the company, rather than look at the technicalities, we'll find a way to settle.”

Mutual acknowledges that the new policy was intended to encourage settlements. “The no-settlement rule has been eroded — there's no question about that,” says Arthur McKey. As he explains, Mutual realized that “it fought many cases for two or three years and spent two hundred thousand dollars on a case that could have been settled for ten thousand. If a mistake is there, we can enter good-faith negotiations and get rid of those cases. We can't be entirely idealistic and say journalists never make mistakes.” As a result, says McKey, Mutual is “persuading” publishers to settle some suits.

Some insurers do more than persuade. Last summer the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*, a 130,000-circulation daily located in southern California, was involved in the early stages of a libel suit. Like so many cases, this one involved a minor error in a routine news story. In March 1979, the paper reported that a local attorney and his wife, a schoolteacher, had been arrested on charges of manufacturing drugs; in fact, the teacher had been arrested only on charges of possession. When notified of the mistake, the paper promptly ran a correction, but a follow-up story inadvertently repeated the original error. In 1984, after years of preliminary motions, the case went to arbitration; the judge ruled in favor of the *Press-Enterprise*, which, he said, did not owe the couple any monetary damages. The couple nonetheless asked for a jury trial.

At that point, the paper's insurance carrier, the Fireman's Fund, decided it had had enough and agreed to an out-of-court settlement of \$7,500 — \$5,000 of it to be paid by the newspaper as stipulated by its policy. “We did not want

to settle, but under the terms of our contract we had to,” says Mel Opatowsky, *Press-Enterprise* managing editor for features and administration. In another case, he adds, “the insurance company even made direct contact with the plaintiff's attorney without telling us. That disturbed us, but it's a sign of the times.”

As serious as the settlement problem is, the current insurance crisis presents a far more immediate threat. Walter Coady, president of Waltery Insurance Brokers, a firm that handles many smaller publications, says that so far “we've been able to get insurance for almost every client we've handled.” However, he adds, availability will “definitely” become a problem “within a couple of years if current trends continue.” Clearly it will be the *Texas Observers* and *San Diego Readers* that first feel the crunch. As Bill Bauer succinctly puts it, “There will be good business reasons to get away from post-Watergate investigative reporting.”

No one has to tell that to Paul Rouse. Rouse is the founder of the *Fishrapper*, a 1,300-circulation weekly published on the north Oregon coast. Rouse, who is sixty-four years old, has also served as the paper's editor, chief reporter, advertising manager, bill collector, and janitor. Over the last ten years the *Fishrapper* has exposed financial irregularities at a local hospital, campaigned to rebuild a dangerous bridge, and raised money for the fire department. Recently, however, Rouse has been discouraged by the growing anti-media climate in the nation's courtrooms. The last straw came in September, when Rouse received a renewal notice from his insurance company. His premium was going up from \$150 to \$352 and his deductible from \$1,000 to \$2,500.

Rouse was appalled. “I don't know about the rest of the country,” he says, “but in Oregon for fifty-two dollars some asshole who doesn't like something you wrote can file a suit in court. He doesn't even have to win the suit and it'll cost me twenty-five hundred dollars. I can't afford twenty-five hundred dollars. I'm better off taking my social security money and buying raffle tickets.” So, on September 26, a week after Rouse received his renewal notice, the *Fishrapper* was laid to rest.

The libel alternative

It's often overlooked and it's right in the newsroom

by GILBERT CRANBERG

Journalists tend to think of a libel suit as an event that unfolds in three stages. Publication is stage one, a visit by an aggrieved reader (or viewer) to a lawyer is stage two, the filing of a lawsuit is stage three. A recent study carried out by the Iowa Libel Research Project — which involved, among other things, interviews with 164 libel plaintiffs and a survey of nearly 900 defamation and privacy cases decided between 1974 and 1984 — found in a significant number of cases that there

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was a crucial fourth step: contact with the media. Since this step is taken before the complainant sits down to talk to a lawyer, it means that the news organization has a chance to resolve the dispute

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before the complainant may have seriously considered resorting to litigation. A golden opportunity, one might think, for the press to show itself at its responsible and considerate best. Instead, virtually all of the complainants-turned-plaintiffs told us that their post-publication experiences with the press had influenced them to bring suit.

What is there about the way the press deals with complainants that, instead of cooling down the aggrieved parties, seems to make them angrier than before?

Interviews with media attorneys, plaintiffs' attorneys, and journalists at seventy-five newspapers led us to the conclusion that there were three main factors at work.

The first was that news organizations, geared to producing the next day's paper, seem to have given little thought to the problem of how to deal with the fallout from the previous day's publication. Thus, few papers have clearly articulated policies and procedures for handling complaints. As a result, newsroom personnel — who usually have not been told how to deal with complaints — tend to handle them in a haphazard manner.

James Gannon, editor of *The Des Moines Register*, provided a graphic description of the resultant newsroom confusion: "Somebody calls and gets bounced from one person to another —



you know, four or five different people in the newsroom — and finally ends up with someone who's on deadline and irritated and saying, 'Well, that's just the way we do it, buddy! That's our policy,' and, you know, bang, or something like that. And I've had these horror stories told to me — people who have gone through this, and they feel they just don't get a hearing, a real hearing, and they don't get a courteous response."

James Squires, editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, speaking of this problem, said that it is "the lost call, the call that just goes to the reporter and never makes it anywhere else — or the call that gets shunted around to four or five phones that never answer — that is where you get into trouble. If I can get that call to [one of] the top twenty editors at the *Chicago Tribune*, I'm going to significantly reduce my chances of getting sued for libel. Every time I got in trouble, it was because some guy was trying to cover his ass and wouldn't deal with the problem."

A second relevant factor is that news organizations have become so conditioned to resisting pressures of all sorts — political pressures, pressures to keep certain stories out of the paper or to put other stories into it — that a siege mentality develops in which demands for retraction or some other form of vindication are regarded as just another kind of pressure. As Arnold Garson, managing editor of *The Des Moines Register*, put it: "Editors and reporters . . . have to build up a way to deal with people every day who want something from them. They have to say no to the lady who wants her daughter's graduation announcement in the newspaper, the guy who sends in the picture of his daughter who's a finalist in the Crawford County mid-teen beauty contest. We build up a kind of hardened way of saying no to people, and it occurs to me that that same attitude carries over to a place where it shouldn't — dealing with people after the fact, in connection with news stories in which they've been harmed or think they've been harmed or wronged . . . a place where we ought to have a good deal more compassion and understanding and take a good deal more time in hearing people out."

This resistance-to-pressure syndrome may be particularly acute in the case of

public officials. Donald Jones, assistant to the editor and ombudsman at *The Kansas City Star and Times*, observed: "The prejudice I find in the news business against the kinds of complaints [made by public officials] is just incredible. Someone calls in and says, 'I'm a councilman,' or 'I'm a representative and I want to complain about this story.' The general reaction, at least in my experience, is, 'That's self-serving. He's a politician or an elected official. He has no justification to complain.'"

A third factor is that newspeople, like the rest of the human race, are reluctant to admit that they may have made a mistake — and the public nature of their work may make journalists particularly reluctant to do so. Thus, what starts out as defensiveness all too often ends up in a shouting match. The horror stories include accounts of reporters telling complainants, "Fuck you, you're full of shit," and of reporters sitting on complaints so that editors learn about them only when libel suits are filed.

Defensiveness is most likely to be a problem when the person who wrote the story or had responsibility for it deals directly with an agitated or abusive complainant. Yet it is commonplace for reporters to be allowed to field complaints about their own work. While reporters usually are expected to notify the desk of complaints about their stories, such notification does not necessarily assure that a disinterested party will hear the complaint. The desk people may themselves have been involved in the story, perhaps to the extent of having made the decision to retain or delete the portions that led to the complaint.

Squires of the *Chicago Tribune* said that it has been his experience that "when reporters and junior editors do make a mistake, and then are reluctant to apologize and never let that complaint get high enough in the organization to get the proper response and attention, what results is a lawsuit that ultimately brings about a damage claim against the newspaper." Squires added that years ago he had allowed the people who made the error to write a retraction and deal with the response, and "that's where I got into trouble. I learned that they cannot bring themselves far enough along

to admit the error with enough flourish to appease the aggrieved party. And by this time they're usually mad, everybody's mad."

The newspeople we interviewed were not surprised that complainants were angered by their contacts with the press. Indeed, many were as critical of the press on this score as were the plaintiffs themselves. "The rudeness in this business is legendary," said Jack Davis, metro editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. And Donald Jones of *The Kansas City Star and Times* commented: "Reporters and editors are not sensitive to readers, and I'm talking about papers of all kinds. They immediately think the complainant is a nut or a kook or self-serving."

When we asked plaintiffs what had led them to complain about an article or broadcast — and subsequently to take legal action — they responded overwhelmingly that it was its falsity. Newspeople agree, with similar near-unanimity, that inaccuracy is a major press problem. As Richard Capen, publisher of *The Miami Herald*, observed in an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors: "We put up with far too many errors that shouldn't be in the newspaper in the first place. If I appear testy on this subject, it's because I am."

Attend any meeting of editors and chances are you will hear complaints — accompanied by nods of approval from colleagues who have had similar experiences — about how they were misquoted in their own papers. Studies of press credibility by journalism groups invariably conclude that inaccuracy and unfairness are major parts of the press's credibility problem.

Given the accuracy shortcomings that newspeople themselves acknowledge, one would expect them to place greater emphasis on making sure that complaints about accuracy are handled properly. One would expect, too, that newspapers with ombudsmen would do a better and more systematic job of dealing with complaints. And they probably do. However, we found during our interviews at two papers that have ombudsmen that the ombudsmen's column or memo-writing responsibilities interfered with their complaint-handling responsibilities. No one enjoys being a target of criticism, reporters and sub-editors at these papers explained, and the

ombudsman's role as critic made the staff reluctant to forward complaints to the ombudsman. A later inquiry at some thirty papers with ombudsmen found that when the ombudsman names names of staff members in his column or in critical in-house memos, the number of complaints forwarded to him by staff members drops to near zero.

Ombudsmen are a scarce and potentially valuable resource. It is surprising, given the defensiveness that abounds in newsrooms, that few of the newspapers that have ombudsmen utilize them to the fullest by requiring staff members to refer complaints to them.

We undertook the Libel Research Project to determine the feasibility of developing nonlitigation methods to deal with libel complaints. Our findings led us to conclude that a major alternative to litigation already exists in the nation's newsrooms. Specifically, editors should:

- ☐ Impress on employees the great power the press has to hurt people — and, as a corollary, insist upon courtesy in dealing with complaints.
- ☐ Center responsibility for dealing with complaints in a person with good human-relation skills who is not responsible for news coverage.

- ☐ Develop policies and procedures for addressing complaints, put them in writing, and emphasize their importance.
- ☐ Make sitting on serious complaints a firing offense.

Some litigious persons will never be deterred from suing. But the press should, at the very least, make sure that complainants who contact journalists do not come away from the encounter more embittered or angry than they were to begin with. In short, the press must pay as much attention to the post-publication consequences of its stories as it does to getting those stories into the hands of readers.

Should reporters torch their notes?

by BETTY HOLCOMB

Kent Pollock used to be the standard pack-rat journalist, hanging onto his notes long after a story ran. But he was cured of his string-saver ways after several days on a witness stand in Philadelphia during which his notebooks provided the ammunition for a barrage of questions in a libel suit. Nowadays, Pollock chucks his notes shortly after a story runs. "Unfortunately, notes can become more of an albatross around your neck than assistance," says Pollock, now a staff writer at *The Sacramento Bee*.

Pollock testified in a libel case brought against *The Philadelphia Inquirer* by a prominent former member of the local district attorney's office, Richard Sprague. Pollock had written a story, based on his notes and those of another reporter, which raised the question of whether Sprague had quashed a murder investigation as a favor to a close friend. In 1983, ten years after the story ran, Sprague won a whopping \$4.5 million libel judgment against the *Inquirer* (see "The Libel Chill: How Cold Is It Out There?" *CJR*, May/June 1985). The case is currently on appeal.

Pollock was not surprised that parts of his and his colleague's notebooks came in for close scrutiny during the

trial. But he was shocked at how those notes were interpreted. A key question in the trial was whether the reporters knew that the victim had a record of criminal homosexuality, and Sprague's

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attorney zeroed in on several words scrawled in a reporter's notebook: the name "Captain Matthews," followed by the words "sodomy charge." Was this note, as Pollock contended, just a re-

minder to check with the local police captain on the victim's past criminal record? Or was it, as Sprague's attorney contended, proof that the newspaper knew the individual had a record of homosexuality, but chose to ignore it in the stories it published?

That question will be settled in the appeals court. But the debate over whether reporters should save their notes and outtakes is just heating up, ignited in large part by the growing size of libel awards. Pollock joins a growing number of journalists and attorneys who argue



Betty Holcomb is a free-lance writer who lives in New York.

that story notes can be disastrous in a court of law. Shorthand and abbreviations are subject to misinterpretation, fragments of notes can be taken out of context, and insignificant points can become the focus of lengthy questioning.

"Notes are full of traps when they come before juries," says Robert Sack, a New York attorney who is outside general counsel for *The Wall Street Journal*. Sack advises reporters to keep their notes, but is sensitive to the sticky problems that arise when they do. "I might look at notes and say, 'Look at all the things this reporter did before going to press,' and think how careful the reporter was. But juries tend to look at notes and say, 'Gee, look at all the strange things he puts in his notes.'"

The issue is further complicated by the growing number of subpoenas for reporters' notebooks, outtakes, and other unpublished material issued on behalf of attorneys representing a wide range of clients, from accident victims to criminal suspects. "Lawyers are trying to annex the news media as their own investigative arm," observes attorney Beth Esinhart, who represents television stations and newspapers in the Norfolk, Virginia, area. The practice can put confidential sources at risk, or make reporters into unwilling witnesses in negligence suits or criminal trials. Some reporters have torched their notes and erased videotapes rather than face such consequences.

To date, few newspapers or broadcast outlets have formal policies about whether and how notes should be saved, or for how long. Those that do are wildly contradictory. In Hartford, Connecticut, the *Courant* asks reporters to save notes for a year; in Cleveland, *The Plain Dealer* orders reporters to destroy them shortly after a story runs. The editors of the *Detroit Free Press*, which lost a major libel case last May, can't decide what to do.

Those who favor saving reporters' notes take the traditional view that they are the starting point of any good libel defense — a way to verify quotes, refresh memories, and reconstruct how a story came together. "Obviously, your notes can be used for you, if only to show all the wild and crazy things you found out and didn't print," says John Ullmann, an assistant managing editor

at the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*.

Some also argue that journalists, given the privileges they enjoy, are morally obligated to let the public know how they go about their jobs. "It's clear that in some instances notes can work against you, but so what?" says James C. Goodale, outside counsel for *The New York Times*, *Time* magazine, and New York public television station WNET. "Is the press not going to disclose the process of newsgathering because we lose a few libel suits? If you believe that Nixon should have destroyed the tapes, then you believe reporters should destroy their notes."

That is precisely the point made by James Beasley, the attorney who represented Sprague against the *Inquirer* and is also representing Senator Paul Laxalt in a \$250 million libel suit against *The Sacramento Bee*. "The media have to be accountable," Beasley says. "There's not a goddam newspaper or television station that need fear the truth if they're doing a good job. If reporters are writing notes in a professional way, they should not have to hide them."

But reporters, especially investigative reporters, are finding the issue far less clear-cut. It is not uncommon for *Wall Street Journal* reporter Walt Bogdanich to accumulate hundreds of pages of notes for an investigative piece. Although he abides by the *Journal's* policy of hanging onto his notes, if it were left to him, he says, "I'd consider throwing out my notes and taking my losses all at once before a jury, rather than having to take losses every day, trying to explain why I used this quote and not that one, and what my scribbles in the margin mean."

His worry over possible repercussions in a libel trial has already changed the way he takes notes. "I no longer write down conclusions that I draw at the end of an interview, or my impressions at the time," Bogdanich says. "I don't note things like whether a guy was nervous and seemed to be lying." This is not an insignificant point, since an investigation may drag on, and Bogdanich may forget exactly what impression he had of someone he interviewed months earlier.

Floyd Abrams, who represents many prominent media clients, says a rela-

tively new aspect of libel cases is also casting doubt on the wisdom of saving notes. Plaintiffs' attorneys are using their pretrial power of discovery, the power to subpoena documents that might help their case, in a more extensive and intrusive way. "Reporters may have to spend days and weeks giving depositions about their notes," Abrams observes. "They have to read them into the record, then explain them, then defend them, even before the case begins. Having to give interminable depositions can hardly encourage vibrant journalism." Nor does it foster a desire to save old notebooks and unused film. "I'm not certain myself what to say to clients about retaining notes," says Abrams.

In some cases, more than just time is at stake. Confidential sources may also be at risk, as Pat Lynch, a producer for NBC Network News, learned after she broadcast a story critical of Lyndon LaRouche and his followers (see "Is Lyndon LaRouche Using Your Name?" *CJR*, March/April 1985). Lynch thought her sources were protected because their voices had been altered and their faces disguised in video-taped interviews. But with sophisticated equipment it is possible to unscramble the voices on such tapes. A few weeks after the outtakes were subpoenaed and handed over to LaRouche's attorney, one of Lynch's confidential sources was accosted in a restaurant by several of LaRouche's supporters and berated for talking to NBC. "I think it's important to save tapes for the historical record," says Lynch. "But my concern is that the wrong people — my confidential sources — will be harmed if [such tapes] are saved."

While more than half the states have shield laws to protect confidential sources, not all judges are willing to apply them in libel cases. The judge in the *Inquirer* case ordered Pollock to reveal confidential sources, saying that the shield law conflicted with Sprague's right to prove that he had been defamed. When Pollock refused to comply, the judge did not send Pollock to jail, but he probably could have.

Unpublished material is also increasingly becoming a target of subpoenas in lawsuits other than libel. "Somewhere in the mid-nineteen seventies, lawyers discovered the press as a resource, and they began to make a horrendous nuis-

ance of themselves," says Washington attorney Bruce Sanford, who represents Scripps Howard newspapers and other media clients. Most often, attorneys seek photographs, tape recordings, and outtakes that may help them prove that their clients were victims of negligence.

Station WVEC-TV in Norfolk, Virginia, was dragged into a legal battle last spring after it aired a series of stories about an arrest victim who was severely bitten by a police dog. The victim sued, charging brutality. Shortly after the suit was filed, the city subpoenaed all of WVEC's outtakes from the series, along with reporters' notebooks. WVEC fought the subpoenas on several grounds, not the least of which was the chilling effect they would have on future sources' willingness to be interviewed, and reporters' willingness to record interviews. WVEC lost, and attorney Beth Esinhart, who represented the television station, worries over the implications of the case.

"Sources will approach reporters more cautiously, and reporters will hesitate before taking notes, taking pictures, or making tape recordings, if this is allowed routinely," Esinhart argues. "Their efforts to accurately cover newsworthy events will be hampered, and

they will be tempted to discard those materials after a story is over."

But in a libel suit, some lawyers and journalists argue, a jury may think badly of a reporter who can produce no notes when called on to defend a story. "There's no way you can properly defend a libel case without knowing exactly how the story was put together," says attorney James Goodale. "If you don't have any notes, you can't reconstruct how you did that."

Many reporters and editors point out that meticulous notes have worked in their favor in libel cases. *The Boston Globe* went to trial this past summer to defend a story it published about John R. Lakian, a Republican candidate for governor of Massachusetts in the last election. The story, by reporter Walter Robinson, revealed that Lakian had not been entirely truthful about his military service and educational background. Lakian claimed he had been defamed, and sued for \$100 million. Robinson's 264 pages of notes, as well as transcripts from three to four hours' worth of tape-recorded interviews, were subpoenaed and eventually turned over to Lakian's lawyers. The notes came up frequently in the trial, but worked in favor of the *Globe*, which won the case.

"My notes pointed up some minor errors in the article, but in a far more significant way they were more damaging to Lakian," says Robinson. "They showed how painstaking my reporting was." The experience convinced Robinson that, "if you're a careful reporter, you damn well better save your notes, because they'll do you and your publication a lot more good than harm." That message was not lost on his colleagues at the *Globe*. "Walter took precise notes and kept them," says Steve Kurkjian, who headed up the *Globe*'s investigative

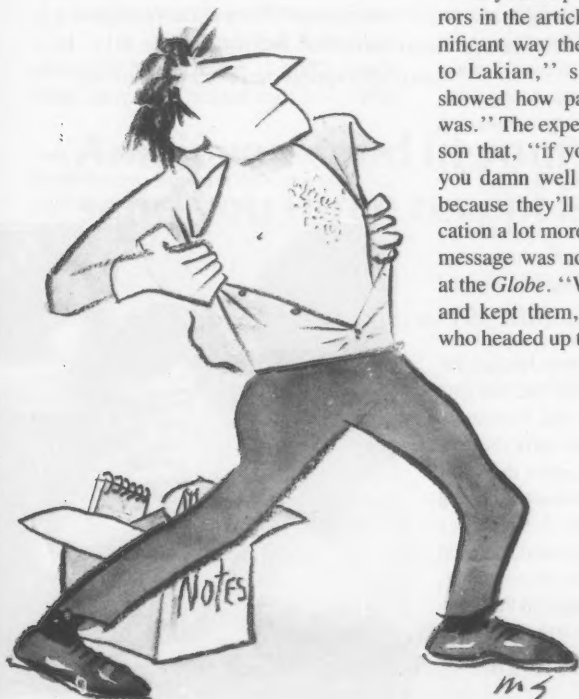
unit at the time. "The way they held up in court is a very proud point with reporters around here."

There is a more practical reason for saving notes: all those dusty cartons full of notebooks are full of information. "We keep notes for at least a year, and we keep stories of special significance for a bit longer," says Roger Moore, metropolitan editor at *The Hartford Courant*. "Not just for legal reasons, but to provide missing links, missing information in stories that develop later. It gives us historical perspective."

Seasoned investigative reporters who want to save their notes, such as Jonathan Kwitny of *The Wall Street Journal*, may use elaborate codes to protect the identity of confidential sources. Some reporters turn their notes over to friends for safekeeping, or put them in safe-deposit boxes. "Never in a billion years would I write the name of a confidential source down in my notes," says one special-projects editor at a major midwestern newspaper. "That shouldn't even be an issue in whether or not to save notes."

At Long Island's *Newsday*, reporters assigned to the paper's investigative unit write daily memorandums, which are stored in the computer for later reference, and then throw out their raw notes. Reporters are instructed to omit the names of confidential sources, and to avoid writing sentence fragments or thoughts that could easily be misinterpreted. Assistant managing editor Robert Greene, who invented the system, did so because he thinks it is crucial for news organizations to have an accurate record of their reporting. "There are still a lot of people in America who believe reporters go around writing things on the back of match covers," he says. "If you go into a libel suit with no notes at all, it just helps further that false image."

Image or no, many journalists are choosing to go about their work without cabinets full of old notebooks. "It's a hot issue, interesting and difficult, and one is biased by one's own experience," says attorney Robert Sack. "Those who have notes that have been a problem say 'destroy them'; those who have notes that have proved very helpful say 'keep them.' I don't expect the dilemma to be resolved anytime soon."





Inside CNN

24 hours with the 24-hour news network

by JOHN LANCASTER

It's fifteen minutes before midnight at the Atlanta headquarters of Cable News Network, almost time for *NewsNight*, the first of CNN's late-night newscasts. Breaking stories — the lifeblood of the world's only twenty-four-hour television news network — are in short supply this late in the day. The flow of domestic news has tapered off, Europe is still asleep, and the Middle East won't start producing copy for a couple of hours yet.

News or no news, the show must go on. In the cavernous studio there is a sense of controlled panic. Everyone pitches in. Hunched over his typewriter, *NewsNight* executive producer Don Lennox pounds out one of the night's top stories, about an illegal alien who won \$2 million in the California state lottery, then was arrested by immigration officers. At ten to midnight, Lennox rips the finished product from the carriage and shoves it at a copy editor. A few minutes later, an interview with the lottery winner's attorney arrives via satellite from San Francisco.

The CNN news machine gathers speed. Tonight's lead item is the siege of the Palace of Justice in Bogota, Colombia, where leftist insurgents have taken eleven Supreme Court judges hostage. The building is now in flames; Lennox wants a live report. Even as *NewsNight*'s logo flashes on television screens across America, technicians are

scrambling to arrange a phone hookup with a Colombian reporter on the scene. But viewers have no inkling of the chaos that prevails off camera. As the teleprompter begins to roll, anchorwoman Beverly Williams looks serene. "Good evening . . ."

Although it might be quite a few years away from justifying its claim to be "the world's most important network," CNN is certainly the world's busiest. To discover how it satisfies its round-the-clock appetite for news, I recently spent twenty-four hours at the network's headquarters in Atlanta.

The overriding impression is of a ceaseless hunt for fresh material — the live report, the unexplored angle, the "expert" who hasn't already appeared on all three networks. As a consequence, CNN can have a spontaneity that's refreshing. Free from the narrow time slots that bind conventional network newscasts, CNN can be thorough, original, and — when a major story is breaking — genuinely riveting. (CNN loves disasters; ratings soared during the TWA hijacking last summer.)

Moreover, the network's strengths go beyond the live coverage of which it has long boasted. CNN's insatiable demand for news has spawned a new science team, a twenty-five-person investigative unit in Washington, and new foreign bureaus in Frankfurt and Nairobi, bringing the total number of foreign bureaus to eight. CNN reporters also have the luxury to develop in-depth pieces that are a rarity on Big Three newscasts. During my time at the network, I watched a thorough wrap-up of the research carried out on board a recent space shuttle flight, the first of a three-part series on the aftermath of Mexico City's earthquake, and a witty, two-part look at Britain's royal family.

Needless to say, when twenty-four hours a day have to be filled with news, the result is not always flawless journalism. Many stories are repeated throughout the day; inevitably, some are stale, trivial, or just plain dull. Also, coverage sometimes reflects the fact that CNN remains handicapped by a lack of resources. The network's annual budget, according to a spokeswoman, is \$100 million. By comparison, each of the other networks spends an estimated \$250 million a year on its news division. Says George Watson, a former CNN executive who now heads ABC's bureau in Washington, D.C., "They're attempting to do something that the networks, with their superior resources, don't have to do. They're spread a little thin."

But Watson acknowledges that the network has evolved into a respectable competitor. "They do a very good job with what they have," he says. In a sense, CNN is the Avis of television news — it tries harder. Five years after

8 AM: The morning editorial meeting gets under way with executive vice-president Ed (not related to Ted) Turner presiding.



both: C.J./Charlie Archenbault

John Lancaster is a reporter for The Atlanta Journal and Constitution.

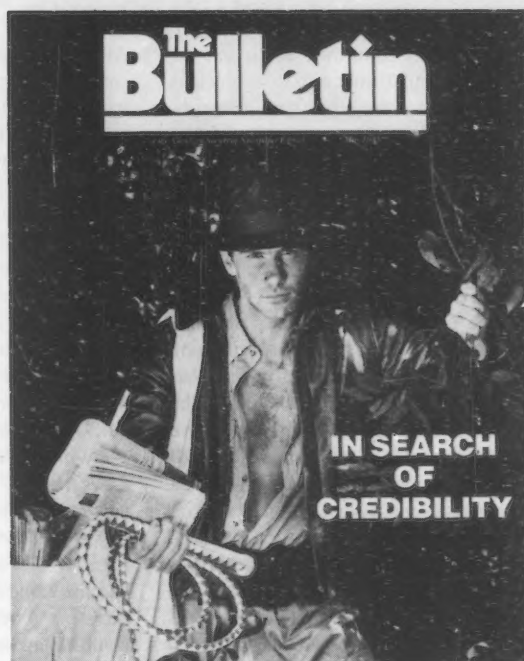
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it was launched by Atlanta broadcasting entrepreneur Ted Turner, the network is reaping dividends for its efforts. CNN edged into the black in the first quarter of 1985, and is now carried by more than 8,600 cable systems into 34 million homes, reaching 80 percent of all cable subscribers. And CNN's status as a poor relation of the Big Three has changed. NBC recently confirmed that it was negotiating with Turner to buy as much as half of CNN — perhaps the ultimate tribute from a rival. (More recently, the deal fell through.)

As if to remind visitors of the upstart network's humble origins, CNN still maintains its cramped headquarters in what once was the clubhouse of Atlanta's first Jewish country club. (The studio of CNN's sister service, Headline News, is on the site of the old swimming pool.) At 8 A.M. producers and executives gather in a conference room for the morning editorial meeting. Executive vice-president Ed (no relation to Ted) Turner presides. In a thickening cloud of cigarette smoke, discussion centers on the day's incoming stories: the scheduled departure from Washington of Soviet re-defector Vitaly Yurchenko, the return from Moscow of Secretary of State George Shultz, part one of correspondent Peter Arnett's three-part earthquake series from Mexico City.

Everyone brainstorms for a fresh angle on the Yurchenko story, now two days old. "Agonizing reappraisal, day three," says Earl Casey, the vice-president for domestic news. Pam Benson, the Washington bureau's senior producer, joins a conference call. She notes that today's *Washington Post* has a story about a Soviet woman who defected a few years ago and is critical of the way the CIA handled her case. "If we could get to her she might make the start of a good next-day angle," she suggests.

Ed Turner starts flinging commands. Someone needs to track down former CIA directors Richard Helms and William Colby; they've already been on National Public Radio, for God's sake. "I want a reporter to do the calls," Turner says. "What we're seeking is information, not necessarily an interview." In addition, he says, "We need to go back to the Hill and see if there's a heads-will-roll piece."

As the meeting winds down, the focus

shifts from the immediate demands of breaking news. The medical-news producer wants the Los Angeles bureau to speed up a piece on a new blood substitute, so it can fill a slot in the 8-to-9 P.M. news broadcast. National assignment editor Charles Hoff suggests a story on the trickle-down effects of the Mexican peso's sharp decline against the dollar. He also mentions a piece on scientists looking into the remote possibility that AIDS could be carried by mosquitoes; Turner says he wants to review the script before it airs.

Most of the time, CNN cannot afford the luxury of carefully scrutinizing the material it broadcasts. In many ways, the network resembles an electronic wire service, with the emphasis on disseminating new information as quickly as possible.

By mid-morning, the pace in the studio is frenetic. "We keep trying to pump new material into the system," explains day-shift supervising producer David Farmer. "Yesterday, for example, we had the explosion [of an oil refinery] in Texas. We heard about it through our contributing station in Houston and got a bulletin on the air before it even made it on the wires."

Today, the space shuttle is due to touch down at Edwards Air Force base

in California at 12:44 P.M. As the time approaches, reporter Tom Mintier, closeted in a cramped editing room, is piecing together the mission wrap-up that will accompany the live broadcast from Edwards.

Mintier finishes the editing with minutes to spare, then takes his place next to NASA scientist Rick Chappell at the anchor desk (CNN has made a practice of importing a NASA expert for each flight). Before the shuttle lands, the two men spend several minutes discussing various experiments involving fruit flies, fluid dynamics, and the effects of weightlessness. A toy space shuttle sits on the desk. By 3 P.M. Mintier has disposed of the shuttle for the day. Then he leaves to catch a five o'clock flight to Richmond to cover flooding there.

(As Mintier's schedule suggests, the pace at CNN can be grueling. It is something of a journalistic sweatshop. The backbone of CNN's labor force consists of broadcasting apprentices, known as V.J.s, hired through the network's video journalism program. Starting salaries are as low as \$8,700 a year and hours tend to be long and unusual. The compensations are immediate responsibility and the opportunity for glory at an early age — hence CNN's nickname, "The College News Network.")

At 3 o'clock, *Newsday* segues into *The International Hour* with Bernard Shaw in Washington. A brief live shot

7:58 PM: Anchors Chris Curle and Don Farmer get ready to go on the air with *PrimeneWS*, CNN's answer to the networks' evening newscasts.



CJR/Charlie Archambault

shows Shultz arriving at Andrews Air Force base, then getting into a black limousine. More interesting is Shaw's live guest, E. Alexandra Costa, the Soviet defector quoted in this morning's *Washington Post*. First, Costa lashes out at the *Post* for quoting her out of context: "They talked to me for three hours, and only printed the most outrageous things I said." Then she gives a thoughtful account of how the CIA handled her defection, and some informed speculation about what is likely to happen to Yurchenko back in the Soviet Union.

Live studio interviews are a staple of the network's diet, and CNN maintains an entire department devoted to tracking down experts who can shed light on a story. "Booking and research" is the province of Gail Evans, who works out of a windowless cubicle overflowing with newspapers, magazines, and file folders. On a scrap of paper taped above her desk, she keeps the home phone number of a key administration official ("He doesn't know I have it; I would only use it in a moment of total desperation"). As we talk, we are interrupted by calls confirming interviews with Sir Oliver Wright, British ambassador to the United States, and Cyrus Vance, secretary of state under Jimmy Carter.

"When news breaks," she says, "like Tuesday night with the defector, we try to react with a guest on the air in maybe forty minutes to an hour. And then we're on a roll. We may have one or two an hour as the story builds and changes. We've reached the point where we interview an average of twenty guests a day. We have an insatiable appetite."

Elsewhere, things are gearing up for the evening broadcasts. Charles Caudill, thirty-three, is executive producer of *Primenews*, which airs at 8 P.M. Atlanta time, and *The CNN Evening News*, which comes on at 10. Wiry and energetic, Caudill presides over the 3:30 editorial meeting, roughing out the night's lineup with snappy decisiveness. He rejects a piece on the closing of a landmark bookstore in Chicago ("too local"), and drops a summary of Shultz's trip ("That bores me. We've already shown him coming back"). Yurchenko is still a big story, as is the Soviet sailor who defected, then apparently changed his mind.

One other development bears watch-



8:15 PM: Charles Caudill (center), executive producer of *Primenews*, confers in "the pit" with producer Pat Neal and director Andy Parson

ing: gunmen have reportedly seized hostages at the Palace of Justice in Bogota, Colombia. Details are still sketchy; a Colombian affiliate is supposed to send videotape by satellite at 5 P.M. Though the incident is remote, it could be a lead item. "Anybody watching our show at eight o'clock has already seen their local news, and they've already seen the network news," Caudill explains. "So my feeling — I don't have any research to back this up — is that they are news junkies. So oftentimes I'll look for an off-lead, like the Colombia story."

The approach is typical of CNN, which tries to confer a distinct personality on each news program. Thus, viewers can choose between programs like *Daybreak*, a fast-paced, early morning news summary, *Daywatch*, which emphasizes live coverage of the day's developing stories, or *Primenews* — CNN's answer to the competition's evening newscasts.

When the feed from Bogota arrives at 5 P.M. V.J.s, producers, and editors cluster at the monitor like ants on a popsicle stick. It's great video: crouching soldiers, rattling machine guns, tanks battering down the palace gate. Caudill is ecstatic. "All this stuff is wonderful," he says. He elects to write the copy himself. There is a rush to get the images on the air. By 5:30 P.M. viewers are watching the siege in their living rooms.

Nothing is ever a certainty at CNN. Within an hour, the status of the Colombia story as the lead item for *Prime-*

news is in jeopardy. Anchors Don Farmer and Chris Curle, who are married to each other, don't like it. Inside their glassed-in office, they argue heatedly with Caudill.

Caudill: "It's great TV. Great pictures."

Farmer: "But is it great journalism?"

Caudill (exasperated): "We've got all these great pictures . . ."

Farmer (derisively): "From Spanish television."

Curle: "What's your lead? Write the lead for us."

Caudill: "You do the hard-top lead, that these guerrillas rushed into this palace."

Curle: "But how do you make people care?"

Caudill (voice rising): "The fact that people ran into this place firing submachine guns with five hundred people trapped inside . . ."

Farmer (interrupting): "How many people killed?"

Caudill: "At least eighteen. Cops, civilians, and guerrillas. And they're still holding two of the top floors as the battle rages on. Gunfire's going on all over the place. Tanks. Helicopters. Grenades going off. And we've got the pictures! I don't think it has to involve Americans to be a lead."

Curle: "I think it's like prime-time TV."

Caudill: "Well, I don't. I mean, we're television, we've got these pictures, and it's a major news story."



1:15 AM: In the post-midnight lull, apprentice Ed Zinn takes a break at the anchor desk.

Farmer: "This is an act of violence in a country that nobody can spell. What's the significance to us?"

The matter unresolved for now, Farmer turns his attention to editing his script. Wielding his pencil like a blunt instrument, he crosses out entire paragraphs and boldly rewrites others. "Our writers are young and immature," he explains. Like many anchors at CNN, Farmer and Curle pride themselves on putting their own stamp on their newscasts. Caudill professes not to mind. "Ninety-nine out of a hundred times they're right," he says.

By the time 8 P.M. rolls around, Caudill has bumped the Colombia story to the number six slot, dropped the space shuttle wrap-up ("Mintier's piece runs longer than the mission"), and nudged the Yurchenko story back into lead position, based on the mysterious death of a Soviet woman in Canada who may have been Yurchenko's lover. "It hit the wires and we called the State Department to get confirmation," he explains. "It's good stuff. It's fresh and it's now." (Later, of course, the woman's death was reported to have been unrelated to Yurchenko.)

Hovering over the pit, as the sunken control area is known, Caudill directs the broadcast like a boxing coach at ringside. The lineup gets shuffled again when a CNN reporter calls from Los Angeles: a federal judge has just declared a mistrial in the case of former FBI agent and accused Soviet spy Richard Miller. With the flip of a switch, Caudill interrupts the teleprompter and informs Curle

of the development over her earphone. She ad-libs the story. Then Caudill goes with a live report from the courthouse steps. Later, the story of the ambush of a U.S. Army officer in Puerto Rico is moved back when the script is temporarily lost.

Despite the occasional glitches, it is a successful show, incorporating major news stories that broke immediately before and during the broadcast. Other stories include a thorough account of flooding in the mid-Atlantic states — with scenes of houses floating away and barges crashing into bridge pilings — and a good wrap-up on the defeat of an anti-abortion referendum in Bristol, Connecticut, a town that is 65 percent Catholic. It's a complete, up-to-the-minute window on the world.

NewsNight, which airs at midnight, has a different purpose. "The philosophy is generally that, by midnight, people have seen the big stories," says Don Lennox, the show's forty-two-year-old executive producer. "Rather than just repeat them, we take a different slant. We try to maintain our integrity but still have a little fun." *NewsNight* is CNN's prime-time broadcast on the West Coast, where, the thinking goes, offbeat stories play well at any hour.

The ironic tale about the illegal alien who won the lottery is ideal fodder for the program, particularly since his arrest followed the main evening newscasts. For the moment, it is the lead story. Then, toward 11 P.M., an hour before

the broadcast, Lennox learns that the Palace of Justice in Bogota is going up in flames. Videotape of the scene arrives by satellite. Lennox bumps the alien story from the lead slot, deciding to use this story instead. During the broadcast, anchor Patrick Emory carries on an impromptu dialogue with a Colombian reporter on the scene. The reporter confirms that eleven judges are still being held hostage.

This looks like the last big breaking story of the night. Something approaching a lull settles over the studio. *Crossfire*, a *Firing Line*-style interview show which airs live at 7:30 P.M., repeats at 1 A.M. At 1:30, Emory and co-anchor Beverly Williams are back on the air with *NewsNight Update*, which recycles most of the earlier news.

Then, at 2:17, the Beirut bureau of United Press International moves a story. People watching at this hour become the first to learn that a caller claiming to represent the Islamic Jihad has warned a Western news agency that the eight American hostages in Beirut will be executed at 6 A.M. Eastern Standard Time.

The caller has promised to phone immediately afterward with information about where to find the bodies. This strikes a chilling note at CNN, whose own former Beirut bureau chief, Jerry Levin, was held hostage for eleven months before being set free.

CNN shifts into crisis mode. News executives are called at home; live shots are arranged for the White House and State Department. The overnight foreign editor, Eason Jordan, confers with international telephone operators in an attempt to reach the network's stringers in Beirut. "The militias control the phone system," he explains, not having any luck.

Despite the tenuous nature of the story, it leads the six A.M. broadcast. By 6:45, no bodies have turned up. By 7, it's apparent that the story is a bust. But no matter; the world remains an interesting place, and CNN has discovered a fresh angle on the Yurchenko story. "Bartenders in Washington," the network informs its viewers, "remember Yurchenko as a congenial man who liked good Scotch and tipped well." It will do for now. After all, at CNN, any news is good news. ■

The reporter as novelist: the case of William Kennedy

by MICHAEL ROBERTSON

"Bill has done what every reporter fantasizes about." John McLoughlin, one of William Kennedy's colleagues on the *Albany Times Union* during the 1960s, was talking. Like most of Kennedy's friends and family, McLoughlin is still a bit dazed by Kennedy's recent success. After twenty years as a newspaper reporter and another thirteen years as a little-known novelist and free-lance journalist, Kennedy suddenly became one of America's best-known writers with the publication of *Ironweed* in 1983. The novel won both the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, and has been translated into eleven foreign languages. Kennedy, who had been working for eight years as a part-time lecturer at the State University of New York in Albany, was promoted to full professor, garnered two honorary doctorates, and received a five-year MacArthur Foundation "genius" fellowship. Along the way, he sold *Ironweed* to the movies, turned two of his earlier novels into screenplays, and shared co-authorship credit with Francis Ford Coppola on *The Cotton Club*.

Kennedy's success places him in a long line of reporters-turned-novelists: Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Ernest Hemingway, to name only the best known. For nearly a century, reporters across America have kept a novel-in-progress stashed away in a desk drawer (or, recently, a computer's memory bank) while they dreamed about the sort of fame that has come to William Kennedy. Kennedy's long and arduous effort to gain literary recognition reveals much about the problems that face newsroom novelists and about the complex, symbiotic relationship between journalism and fiction in modern America.

During twenty years of newspaper work, Kennedy served as a city reporter, sportswriter, book critic, assistant man-

aging editor, columnist, business reporter, movie reviewer, and managing editor. Pulitzer Prize-winner William J. Dorvillier, one of Kennedy's former editors, calls him "one of the best complete journalists — as reporter, editor, whatever — that I've known in sixty years in the business. He was a hell of a newspaperman."

Kennedy knew he wanted to be a newspaperman from the time he was in sixth grade. He worked on his high school paper in Albany, read two or three newspapers every day, and dreamed about becoming a columnist like Runyon or Mencken or Gallico or Pegler. Even now, after twenty years as a reporter, Kennedy can say, "I am absolutely enthralled every time I go into a newspaper building." When he graduated from college in 1949, he went straight to the staff of the *Post Star* in Glens Falls, New York.

Drafted into the Army during the Korean War, Kennedy wound up in Europe as sports editor for the Fourth Division's newspaper. "They gave me a jeep, and I ran around Europe covering ball games and golf tournaments and the Olympics, and had a great time," Kennedy recalls. Returning to the States in 1952, he landed a job on his hometown newspaper, the *Albany Times Union*.

Kennedy stayed at the *Times Union* until 1956, when he left for Puerto Rico, taking with him extensive experience as a city reporter, along with a collection of unpublished short stories. Those short stories, Kennedy says now, "weren't very good. I used to think that I could go out and report and come back with a Hemingway story — a lot of journalists in those days were aspiring to be Hemingway. The world was so interesting to report on as a young writer that you felt, 'My God, this is a short story!' Well, it turns out that it may be the nucleus of a short story, but all by itself it's a piece of experience, a slice of life. You haven't absorbed it, you've just witnessed it. You haven't created it."

Kennedy was lured to Puerto Rico by the chance to serve as assistant managing editor of a new English-language daily. The paper folded after less than a year, and Kennedy went briefly to *The Miami Herald*, then returned to Puerto Rico, where he became managing editor of another English-language daily, the still-thriving *San Juan Star*. By this time Kennedy had already written a novel that he says now he'd just as soon forget. But he had no intention of giving up on fiction, and when Saul Bellow came to San Juan in 1960 as writer-in-residence at the University of Puerto Rico, Kennedy joined his fiction-writing workshop. Encouraged by Bellow's praise, Kennedy resigned as the *Star*'s managing editor, began working at the newspaper only on weekends, and devoted the remainder of his time to completing a second novel. Once it was finished, he sent it to publishers, gathering in return only another fistful of rejection letters. So when the *Albany Times Union* invited him to rejoin its staff, he accepted. But with one stipulation: he would work only half-time. He was determined to start a third novel.

When Kennedy returned to Albany and the *Times Union* in 1963, he found a very different newspaper from the one he had left seven years before. The *Times Union* of the earlier years was, according to one longtime Albany newsman, a "worse than mediocre paper,"

William Kennedy in 1960 as a reporter in Puerto Rico



Michael Robertson is a lecturer in English and in American Studies at Princeton.



'Journalism could go just so far. I had to take it to a further dimension of the imagination where journalism can't go — if it's honest'

William Kennedy
in his Albany study

content with its position under the thumb of Albany's Democratic party machine. The Machine — Albany reporters tend to refer to it in capital letters — was as powerful and well-organized as any political organization in the country. Dan O'Connell, the Machine's tough Irish boss, kept a stranglehold on Albany politics from 1921 until his death in 1977, nearly into the era of current New York governor Mario Cuomo. Cuomo has been known to tell a story of Dan O'Connell being shipwrecked on a desert island with another man, with only one coconut between them. They take a vote to determine who should eat the coconut. When the votes are counted, O'Connell wins, 110 to 1.

Albany reporters traded such stories among themselves for years. But few found their way into print until the 1960s, when publisher Gene Robb and editor Daniel Button began battling the Machine in the *Times Union's* columns. Among their warriors was William Kennedy, who wrote a controversial series on Albany's slums that was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and that landed him in the middle of a protracted struggle with the Machine.

Colleague John McLoughlin remem-

bers the political heat that Kennedy's muckraking generated. "His series on poverty in Albany was a daring thing to do at the time," McLoughlin explains. "It was an affront to the Machine. Those articles really caused a stir." Dan O'Connell, talking about the newspaper business in 1965, the year Kennedy's slum series appeared, commented, "You know, those newspapers are the most un-American thing in the U.S."

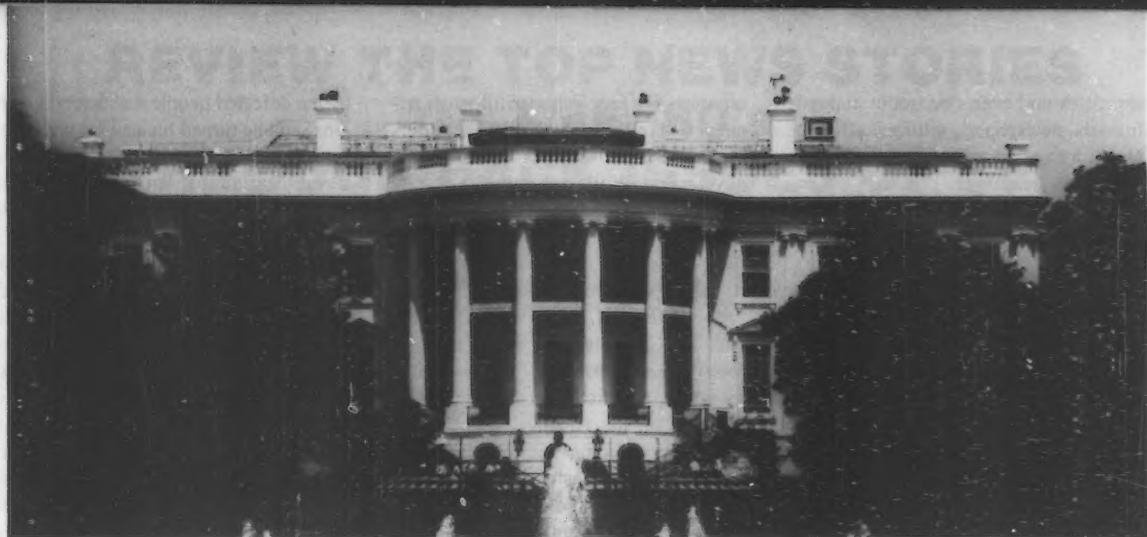
Kennedy kept his journalism and the controversy it generated confined to one part of his life and continued working on a new book. Six years after he returned to Albany, it was published, and *The Ink Truck* became his official first novel. First novels are supposed to be autobiographical; *The Ink Truck*, sure enough, is set in an unidentified medium-sized city much like Albany and has a newspaper columnist as its hero. But the resemblances to Kennedy's career stop there. The plot is deliberately surrealistic. "I wanted everything to be slightly out of kilter, six inches off the ground," Kennedy says. Bailey, the novel's amiable and bearish hero, goes from one improbable adventure to another: he is kidnapped by gypsies, seduced by a secretary whose sexual

preferences involve a mechanical cow and bull, and drugged and stripped naked at a party given by his newspaper's publisher.

Kennedy says the novel's autobiographical elements are purely psychological: "Bailey won't give up, he keeps at it. That kind of insane perseverance was at the heart of what I felt I was going through in the sixties. It was a dismal, defeated period for Bailey, and so it was for me." By the time he began *The Ink Truck* in the mid-sixties, Kennedy had spent over ten years writing fiction but had published no more than a few short stories. He had gotten married, had two children, and all the while worked on newspapers only part-time. His wife, Dana, helped support the family; Kennedy remembers that "we were always broke."

Kennedy's luck, if not his finances, seemed to be improving when, not long after *The Ink Truck* was published in 1969, he sold another novel on the basis of a few completed chapters and left newspaper work for good. *Legs*, his second published novel, is based on the career of gangster Jack "Legs" Diamond, who was killed in Albany in 1931. The novel took Kennedy six painstaking years of research and writing. "The nature of my reporting style was to saturate myself with information," he explains. "When I wrote a series on slum housing in Albany for the *Times Union*, I reported on it for three months before I began to write. When I started *Legs*, I went on a maniacal quest for background. I spent a small fortune Xeroxing newspapers. The facts mattered extraordinarily to me, because I wanted to write a novel that would be authentic."

Yet Kennedy soon recognized the impossibility of writing a journalistically authentic account of Diamond. Too many legends were attached to the gangster, and the newspapers and books contradicted one another. "So I chose to use everything: the truth, the lies, the legends, the myths," Kennedy says. "In a certain way, the book is a journalistic report, not on gangsters, but on the way America looks at gangsters." The novel begins and ends in myth, with Diamond, shot three times in the head, defying death. In between, Kennedy takes names



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

and dates and even courtroom dialogue from the newspapers, telling it all in the tough, irony-flecked voice of Diamond's Irish Catholic lawyer.

Legs is something of an anomaly in contemporary American fiction, a field in which most serious critical attention goes to "metafictionists" like John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon—writers who have abandoned realism in favor of a fictional technique that calls attention to its own fictionality. *Legs*'s gritty realism harks back to the fiction of Hemingway and James M. Cain—who, like Hemingway, started his career as a reporter—and to Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, which is heavily based on newspaper accounts of a murder trial.

Legs sold only moderately well, and was ignored by the leading book reviews and most major magazines. This may have been due in part to the diminishing force of a literary tradition dating back to the 1890s. At that time, a newspaper boom in a period of surging urban population caused a demand for reporters, and young people with literary ambitions found that they could both support themselves and gain writing experience by working on newspapers. And the growing literary interest in realistic tales of urban experience encouraged reporters to put their knowledge of the city into novels. Lincoln Steffens, who served as city editor of a New York daily in the 1890s, wrote that every reporter in the city room had artistic aspirations: "My staff were writers," Steffens said in his *Autobiography*, "getting the news as material for poetry, plays, or fiction, and writing it as news for practice." When a young free-lance reporter published a critically acclaimed, best-selling novel in 1895, the figure of the reporter-artist became enshrined in American myth. H.L. Mencken said that when the public found out that Stephen Crane, author of *The Red Badge of Courage*, was a New York reporter, "The miracle lifted newspaper reporting to the level of a romantic craft, alongside counterfeiting and mining in the Klondike."

Since Hemingway's time, as the realistic novel has become less popular, talented reporters have turned to literary outlets other than the novel, such as Hollywood screenplays and the sort of literary nonfiction written by former

reporters like Gay Talese. Still, any journalist will tell you that half the reporters he knows want to write a best-selling novel. And William Kennedy, despite *Legs*'s cool reception, was not ready to give up.

The pivotal character of Kennedy's third novel, *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game*, is a newspaperman with literary ambitions: Martin Daugherty, columnist and fictional predecessor of Kennedy on the *Albany Times Union*. Daugherty becomes closely involved with the Albany Machine when he helps Machine boss Patsy McCall rescue his kidnapped nephew, an incident based on the 1933 kidnapping of Dan O'Connell's nephew John. Asked if he sees any contradiction between his own muckraking articles and Martin Daugherty's appreciative view of the McCalls, Kennedy replies no. "In the first place, I don't see it as an affectionate portrait of the Machine. I did have an affectionate regard for many of the people in the Machine. But the portrait of the Machine in *Billy Phelan* is meant to show just how powerful it was. They owned the judges, the police, the D.A. But after the muckraking years, I began to follow politics in a different way, not as a hostile advocacy journalist. I had been deploring the Machine, but at the same time I was absolutely fascinated by it. So I began to think of writing about it in a novel."

Ironweed, Kennedy's next novel after *Billy Phelan*, proved to be both nearer to and further from his experience as a reporter than any of his previous books. The genesis of *Ironweed* was in 1953 when Kennedy, a new reporter on the *Times Union*, was assigned to write an article on a downtown rescue mission for winos. The memory of the people he encountered there stuck with him, and a few years later in Puerto Rico, in the midst of palm trees and Caribbean breezes, he found himself working on a novel that had an Albany bum as one of its characters. He called the character Francis Phelan and titled the novel *The Angels and the Sparrows*. It was this novel that Saul Bellow praised but that no publisher would accept.

Shortly after Kennedy left Puerto Rico and returned to the *Times Union*, he wrote a series on Albany's skid row. Once again, Kennedy became fascinated

by the defeated people on society's margins, and he turned his newspaper series into a nonfiction book, *The Lemon Weed*. But in a pattern that had become familiar to Kennedy, no publisher would take it. "Nobody wanted to publish a book about a bunch of bums talking to one another," he explains. Kennedy set *The Lemon Weed* aside for a decade until he had written *Billy Phelan*, in which he resurrected the character of Billy's father, Francis, from his unpublished Puerto Rican novel. Once *Billy Phelan* was completed, Kennedy found Francis Phelan taking over his imagination, and so he began *Ironweed*, combining the fictional Francis with one of the real-life bums chronicled in *The Lemon Weed*.

"I liked *The Lemon Weed* as journalism," Kennedy says, "but journalism could go just so far. I had to take it to a further dimension of the imagination, where journalism can't go—if it's honest. You can do wonderful things in journalism, and I admire enormously the journalism of James Agee and Gay Talese and Tom Wolfe. But Wolfe was expecting journalism to do things it can't do when he said that the novel is dead and the New Journalism has replaced it. The great novels give you things no journalist can give you."

In a review of the recently published *The Dangerous Summer*, Ernest Hemingway's posthumous book on bullfighting, Kennedy wrote that Hemingway "lived all his life with his own *mano a mano* [hand-to-hand combat] between nonfiction and fiction." In conversation, Kennedy acknowledges that the *mano a mano* exists for him too. "But you can do both," he insists. "I've never gotten out of journalism. I don't have to, and I don't want to." Indeed, he recently published *O Albany!*, a nonfiction paean to his hometown that began as an updating of a 1964 *Times Union* series on Albany's neighborhoods. "Journalism," he says, "is a great training ground. I was served enormously well by it. No bail bondsman, no lawyer, no politician, no bartender, no actor can enter into the variety of worlds that a journalist can. Newspaper reporting has got to be the least boring profession in history. But I believe now that writing novels is what I'm supposed to do in this world." ■

REVIEW THE TOP NEWS STORIES OF THE '80's THROUGH BACK ISSUES OF CJR



May/June 1980
Jacobo Timerman,
Walter Cronkite,
monopoly games



March/April 1981
Daily News, hostage
families, White House
beat



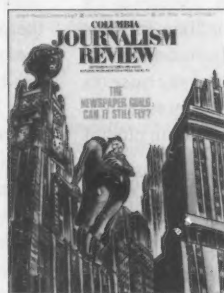
March/April 1982
Gay news, public
authorities, Chicago-
style journalism



May/June 1982
Voice of America,
Mexican muckraking,
newsroom marriages



July/August 1982
Clampdown on leaks,
Murdoch's *Post*, *Daily News* diary



Sept/Oct 1982
Newspaper Guild, black
press, UPI



Nov/Dec 1982
Covering Lebanon,
computer journalism,
South Africa's "free" press



Jan/Feb 1983
Special section on libel,
cable TV, Woodstein in
Des Moines



March/April 1983
USA Today, videotex,
Philadelphia after the
Bulletin



May/June 1983
Reagan and the press,
Soviet photojournalism,
covering the nonprofits



Sept/Oct 1983
EPA, Murdoch's *Times*,
Washington Monthly



Nov/Dec 1983
El Salvador, Texas
journalism, Vietnam
revisionism

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Busing, Boston — and the *Globe*

**Common Ground:
A Turbulent Decade in the Lives
of Three American Families**

by J. Anthony Lukas

Alfred A. Knopf. 672 pp. \$19.95

by PHILIP WEISS

In a note at the beginning of *Common Ground*, J. Anthony Lukas writes that the more time he spent with the three Boston families that are the principal subjects of his book, "the harder it became to assign easy labels of guilt or virtue." Indeed, his deep feeling for these families and the ways in which they were affected by the city's school desegregation plan has earned *Common Ground* high praise.

There are places in this book, though, where Lukas comes close to labeling to make a point. *The Boston Globe's* editorials about busing amounted to "lecturing," he writes, and says later, "[M]ost of these dissertations were the work of a determined Yankee named Anne C. Wyman. The *Globe's* one true Brahmin (her C stood for Cabot), she lived on a Cambridge hillside from which she viewed the busing issue in starkly moral terms."

That snapshot is included in "The Editor," Lukas's lengthy chapter on the role of *The Boston Globe* and its former editor, Thomas Winship, in the busing crisis. The section contains no easy label of guilt, but its rendering of liberals on hillsides is among the less charitable portraits in this excellent book. Still, charitable or not, the chapter on the *Globe* raises fascinating and unsettling questions about the proper role of a newspaper in a city torn by social conflict.

Philip Weiss, a free-lance writer in New York, is a former reporter for the Philadelphia Daily News.

Lukas says that, in the course of his career, Winship had learned to regard journalism as a means of political activism. He had been impressed by publisher Philip Graham's use of *The Washington Post* to push liberal causes when Winship was a reporter there, and after he went to the *Globe* as a Washington correspondent in 1956, Lukas suggests, Winship made the paper something of an organ for then Senator John F. Kennedy. "It was a mutually beneficial relationship: Jack, a Massachusetts politician in pursuit of the presidency; Tom, a Massachusetts reporter in pursuit of an editorship."

Winship achieved his goal in 1965 at the same time that the *Globe* overtook *The Boston Herald* in suburban circulation. The paper soon became aligned with the city's elite, the "Cambridge-Georgetown axis" of liberal intellectuals, politicians, and newsmen. "[I]ncreasingly, it was to those red-brick enclaves that Tom Winship looked for his closest friends, his social values, his political commitments," Lukas writes. In 1967, when the *Globe* broke a seventy-two-year tradition of not endorsing political candidates and backed Kevin White for mayor over Louise Day Hicks, the school-committee chairwoman who stood for protecting the white neighborhood school, the paper, Lukas suggests, was motivated less by concern for racial justice than by classism. Hicks, a "huge marshmallow of a woman in her tentlike dresses, was patently from a different social order." Her election would have made Boston look "bush" in the eyes of the people Winship cared about.

By 1974, Lukas argues, the *Globe* had superseded the Roman Catholic cardinal in terms of clout, and when federal judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr., ordered busing to desegregate the Boston school system, the paper was committed to making

the desegregation plan run smoothly. Although in another context Lukas states that Winship was "uninhibited by traditional journalistic objectivity" and thought that the editorial-page and newspaper operations should not be separate, the author does not take sides on the question of whether the *Globe* in its news columns played down the violence and protests surrounding busing, as some of the paper's critics charged. In any case, the paper's editorials put it firmly in the pro-busing camp. That fall the *Globe* was boycotted, its building fired upon, and its employees were attacked.

At one point an assistant to the publisher of the *Globe* wrote a memo to Winship, arguing that the paper should moderate its support of the plan lest it be left out on a limb if the plan should be modified in the face of widespread protest. "I'll be damned if I think we should cave in," Winship wrote back. "We have to stand fast now on the matter of principle."

Lukas is careful to point out Winship's success at the *Globe*. Daring and charismatic, he transformed the *Globe* from a mediocre paper into a fine one. Its desegregation coverage earned it a Pulitzer Prize for public service in 1975.

If there's an indictment here it is to be found in Lukas's assertion that the paper covered with "abstraction" the working-class communities affected by busing. "We are part of the establishment that has lost the close touch with the people that we used to have," Robert Phelps, an assistant managing editor, wrote to the *Globe's* publisher in another of the memos whose inclusion makes this book such a rich document. "It's time for all of us to learn more about our neighbors."

As a suburbanite who was charmed by liberal ideas that did not square with the reality of urban communities, Win-

ship serves to bolster one of Lukas's major themes. Again and again the author shows us moralists who imposed a view of racial right and wrong on a situation whose diverse configurations owed more to the historical imprint of class. Lukas does not seem to be arguing that these people were wrong, but rather that they were too righteous, that they were too quick to prescribe solutions to problems whose costs would be borne by others, and, perhaps worst of all, that they discounted the humanity of the poor whites in the picture. The issue is clearly framed in the case of Judge Garrity, whom Lukas comes close to assailing for making decisions with his mind instead of with his "marrow bone." As it turned out, busing failed to achieve its objective. Well-off whites fled the school system. Desegregation came to mean mixing de-

prived blacks with deprived whites.

From a journalist's perspective, the question that remains after the story of Winship's struggle is, What sort of reporter does Lukas say one should be? Plainly, he is sympathetic to the professionalism of Robert Phelps, like himself a former *New York Times* reporter, although he implies that a doggedly objective method leaves a reader struggling through a "welter of fact."

But then this book is crammed with facts, some of them numbing, like the pages we get on a Bostonian's eighteenth-century ancestors in Maine and a car-thieving technique called looping. All those facts, though, involve real people's lives. The kinds of facts that seem to irritate Lukas are bloodless statistics,

which he openly disdains in his introductory note. What Lukas is saying is that reporters must involve themselves with real people.

One key to Lukas's views may be found in his portrayal of priests. Some priests would "play prophet for a few days, then return to their comfortable rectories," he says. Then there was a small group of priests in Charlestown, a white community deeply angered by busing, who were motivated by their "love and concern" for the "Town." "They didn't proselytize or preach; they listened, for they knew that half an hour across a kitchen table with most Townies was worth five hours in the pulpit." One of them testifies about busing before a federal commission, and urges outsiders to appreciate the city's diversity. Implicitly, Lukas seems to expect reporters

A touch of classism: School-committee chairwoman Louise Day Hicks (in dark glasses, below) leading an antibusing march in South Boston in 1975; probusing editor Thomas Winship (inset) in his office at The Boston Globe



above: The Boston Globe

UPI/Bettmann

BOOKS

to share the same lofty values — “a sense of common purpose, a ‘mission’ to the inner city.” Unfortunately, few reporters working on such significant stories are ever likely to meet Lukas’s standard of dedication.

One helluva guy

I Never Played the Game

by Howard Cosell with Peter Bonventre
William Morrow and Company. 380 pp.
\$18.95

by IRA BERKOW

In *I Never Played the Game*, Howard Cosell writes that he is “a man of causes.” He also says that “I’m a former attorney . . . and the relative anonymity of the law does not make it a satisfying refuge, not after you’ve experienced the spotlight for so long. . . .” That is, the spotlight.

Elsewhere, Cosell allows that he did “a helluva interview” and helped pull off “a helluva show,” and asserts, “if I’m nothing else, I’m one helluva communicator.”

When he testifies about the sordid elements of boxing before a Senate judiciary committee, he looks back with

Ira Berkow is a sports columnist with The New York Times.

satisfaction at his “performance.” He also gives himself credit for making *Monday Night Football* an “Event” in our “pop culture” — quickly brushing aside such considerations as the popularity of football when the show went on the air and the novelty of football on Monday night television.

Why did ratings for *Monday Night Football* begin to drop in the early 1980s? Cosell attributes the drop to several factors, including a glut of sports on TV and increased viewing of cable shows. Yet “some,” he writes, “even blamed me.” Could this be so? He does tell us that he has been “vilified” in the press. The attacks were so vitriolic, he writes, they “would make Richard Nixon look like a beloved humanitarian.” But he discounts reports that people were tired of his voice and opinions and were turning off the television sound to listen to the radio broadcast of Monday night football games.

Maybe all of Cosell’s positions are valid. The trouble is, he seldom supports his opinions with facts and figures, or convincing testimony. He wants us to take what he says on faith, that he does, as he contends, “Tell it like it is.”

In all this romps the ghost of self-promotion. There is the overweening need to be noticed. Cosell describes his ego as “healthy,” but adds that “the flip

side of my ego is the insecurity within me because of my background [middle class Brooklyn Jewish] and my need for acceptance and financial security.” Whatever the cause of the pumping, the ego has become inflated and too often gets in the way of the journalist/author. The result is that the self-importance of the informant submerges the importance of the information.

This book is Howard Cosell’s valedictory of sorts. He is sixty-seven years old and has been a sports broadcaster first on radio and then on television and radio for nearly a third of a century. He is among the most recognizable and controversial figures in this country. He is a celebrity of magnitude. He has accomplished this in two ways: by being a distinctive entertainer, and by being a distinctive sports journalist in a field — television — that has suffered and continues to suffer from a paucity of sports journalists.

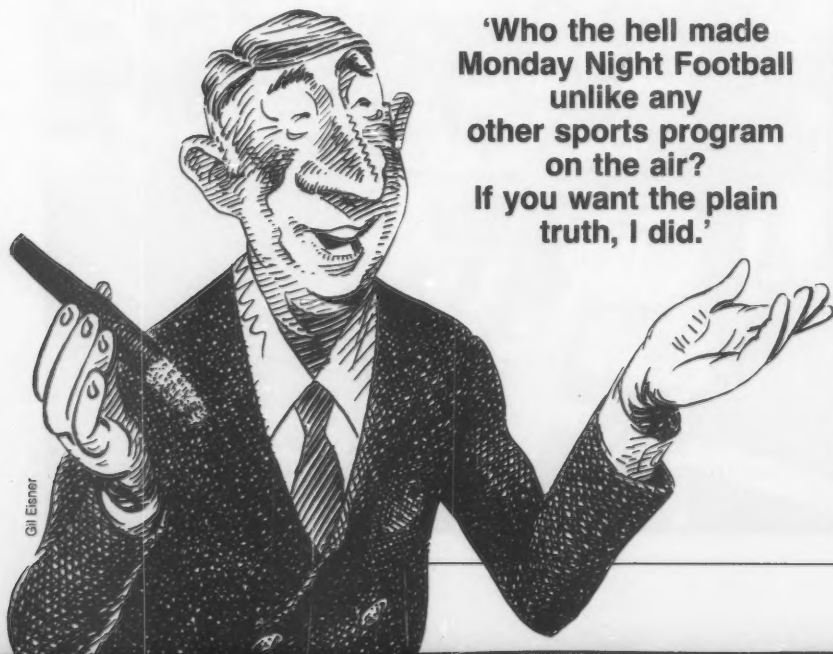
As a “man of causes,” Cosell staunchly defended the constitutional rights of Muhammad Ali when these had been stripped from him by reactionary boxing commissions because of his refusal on religious grounds to accept being drafted into the military. And Cosell defended Curt Flood against the infamous reserve clause in baseball.

These were important stands, and Cosell has received deserved plaudits for them. But he is guilty of distortion, the kind for which he criticizes Van Gordon Sauter, then the president of CBS Sports, who, Cosell says, issued statements that made “CBS look like the only network in pursuit of truth and beauty in sports.”

Granted, only a handful of journalists joined Cosell in arguing, on legal grounds, against opponents of Ali and Flood. But these journalists never get a call in Cosell’s book. This is one example of the selective reporting found in *I Never Played the Game*.

Within Cosell the public persona and author there exists a mass of contradictions. Again and again he informs us that he is a “journalist.” And he is understandably proud of his show *SportsBeat*, one of the few continuing investigative sports programs on the air (though it has consistently gotten very low ratings and

**‘Who the hell made
Monday Night Football
unlike any
other sports program
on the air?
If you want the plain
truth, I did.’**



ABC recently announced it was taking the show off the air).

But as a journalist Cosell has also allowed himself to be a shill, though he cringes at the implication. He has plugged ABC's coverage of football and boxing (sports, incidentally of which he has been increasingly critical), and has even plugged *Battle of the Network Stars*, for which he has been the host. And, on at least one occasion, he sold his opinion to a high bidder — Fruit of the Loom — for which he did an underwear television commercial. Yet in the book he says that "I never played the game with advertisers," and that he has never compromised any "major" journalistic principles. He does not mention in these pages the commercials or the plugs.

He takes credit for his public persona's having helped "revitalize boxing's once flagging popularity and boosted its TV ratings." He insists that "there is no denying it." No facts or figures. The reader must accept that Cosell is telling it like it is.

Such statements are hard to accept, however, once one realizes just how self-serving Cosell can be. He tells us, for example, about Mike Wallace interviewing him for a segment for CBS's *60 Minutes* — a segment that was never aired because, Cosell says, "I beat Mike Wallace's ass." (Wallace said it was dull.) Wallace had asked, "Now, Howard, will you admit that you know nothing about tennis?" According to Cosell, his reply had been: "You want to talk about tennis, Mike? . . . Okay, then, let's talk about the scandal over at CBS and the winner-take-all matches your network televised."

Interestingly, none of the others present — Wallace, producer Norman Gorin, and former tennis great Bill Talbert — recalls Cosell's retort. And Gorin says it was not in his notes nor on the tape. Perhaps more to the point, the interview took place in January 1976, and the winner-take-all scandal (in which, as readers may recall, a loser was in fact paid) broke in *The New York Times* in March 1977. Even if Cosell was privy to inside information, why then did the journalist who says he "tells it like it

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is" and who has "never played the game," sit on a "scandal" for fourteen months? No answer here.

Cosell does not mention how it was that, in announcing boxing matches, he was able to so astutely predict the winners. It was only when a microphone was accidentally left on that viewers heard that the scoring was relayed to Cosell before it was given by the ring announcer.

On another occasion, Cosell tells us he was getting tired and bored with *Monday Night Football*, and that this is why he left the show in 1984. Yet he obviously was envious of the popularity of his two partners in the booth, Frank Gifford and Don Meredith, who seemed to exclude him from their inner circle of friendship. And of the Emmy for broadcasting excellence that Meredith won (and Cosell didn't) for *MNF*, Cosell says it was "a popularity contest." But when *SportsBeat* wins an Emmy, Cosell clearly believes it is deserved.

Cosell repeatedly cudgels the networks for their insistence on employing

inexperienced "ex-Jocks" in the broadcasting booths. A legitimate position, but whom does he most highly recommend for assignment to *Monday Night Football*? Robert Lipsyte or Larry Merchant or Dick Schaap, former standout print sports journalists who are now respected as television sports reporters? Or one of the young bright broadcasting journalists, like Jim Lampley or Bob Costas or Brent Musburger? No, Cosell recommends Bill Cosby, the comedian.

Historically, a journalist reports the news, a sports journalist reports the contest. But with Cosell the contest is subsumed by the "reporter." Cosell has said that people tune in to hear Cosell and not necessarily the contest. He seems not to shrink from the observation made by Red Smith, the late sports columnist, that "Cosell doesn't broadcast sports; he broadcasts Cosell." Cosell proudly quotes a newspaper television critic who wrote: "We weren't watching the Ali-Spinks fight

... We were watching you watch the Ali-Spinks fight." Maybe that critic was right, but I remember trying to watch the fight and wishing Cosell would be considerably less intrusive. I persist in believing that people tuned in to watch the Ali-Spinks fight, not merely to listen to Cosell at the microphone. As Frank Gifford has said about *Monday Night Football* (and he is quoted in the book to this effect): "We are only as good as the game. If the game remains strong, then you can have Attila the Hun in the booth."

The recent ratings of *MNF* are up decidedly from last season, this despite Cosell having been replaced in the broadcast booth by Joe Namath — yet another of Cosell's hated "Jockocracy." Whether Namath is Son of Attila the Hun is another matter. But it indicates that Gifford's point is relevant.

Cosell has been accused of clunky use of the language, and we get some of that here. Like this mixed figure of speech, apropos of his contribution to *Monday Night Football*: "... if it sounds like my ego is churning on overdrive for taking the lion's share of credit for it, then I'll take the mane."

For all this, we must still acknowledge Cosell's contributions to sports broadcasting. When a wide receiver dropped a pass in earlier days of football broadcasts, the announcer customarily blamed it on the sun being in his eyes. With Cosell, the receiver dropped the ball because he was inept on that play. Cosell did open the door to greater truth in sports broadcasting, as virgin an area as ever there was.

We must also acknowledge Cosell's ability to put sports in perspective. His contention that sports "are out of whack" is backed up with insightful and knowledgeable chapters on the hypocrisy of college sports, the greed of professional sports owners, and the corruption of professional boxing (Cosell plumps for a federal commission). While none of these concepts is original, they need to be continually voiced by fine reporters. And, at his best, Howard Cosell is just that. However, he is not always at his best, and the striking unevenness of Cosell the commentator is clearly mirrored in Cosell the author. ■

The pitfalls of being a somebody

The passage below is taken from a letter written by political columnist Walter Lippmann to friend and arts critic Alexander Woolcott on October 25, 1940, in which he explains his decision to take no part in the Roosevelt-Willkie campaign. One of the 20,000 letters Lippmann wrote between 1906 and 1974, it appears in Public Philosopher, a collection edited by Yale historian John Morton Blum and recently published by Ticknor and Fields.

It seems to me that once the columnist thinks of himself as a public somebody over and above the intrinsic value and integrity of what is published under his name, he ceases to think as clearly and as disinterestedly as his readers have a right to expect him to think. Like a politician, he acquires a public character, which he comes to admire and to worry about preserving and improving; his personal life, his self-esteem, his allegiances, his interests and ambitions becoming indistinguishable from his judgment of events. In thirty years of

journalism I think I have learned to know the pitfalls of the profession and, leaving aside the gross forms of corruption, such as profiting by inside knowledge and currying favor with those who have favors to give, and following the fashions, the most insidious of all the temptations is to think of oneself as engaged in a public career on the stage of the world rather than as an observant writer of newspaper articles about some of the things that are happening in the world.

So I take the view that I write of matters about which I think I have something to say but that as a person I am nobody of any public importance, that I am not adviser-at-large to mankind or even to those who read occasionally or often what I write. This is the code which I follow. I learned it from Frank Cobb who practiced it, and abjured me again and again during the long year when he was dying that more newspaper men had been ruined by self-importance than by liquor. You will remember that he had had opportunity to observe the effects of both kinds of intoxication.

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MOTHER JONES blew the whistle on Senator Paul Laxalt a few months before the election. As usual, we were way ahead of the established media.

Why were we alone with the story? Good question. Especially when you consider that ABC devoted thousands of dollars to the same investigation of Laxalt. But "World News Tonight" viewers never saw the ABC segment (nor two other exposés on powerful Republicans for that matter).

A year after the Laxalt story, we took our readers behind the scenes at ABC and treated them to a detailed account of the high-stakes corporate drama that went on behind closed doors at ABC.

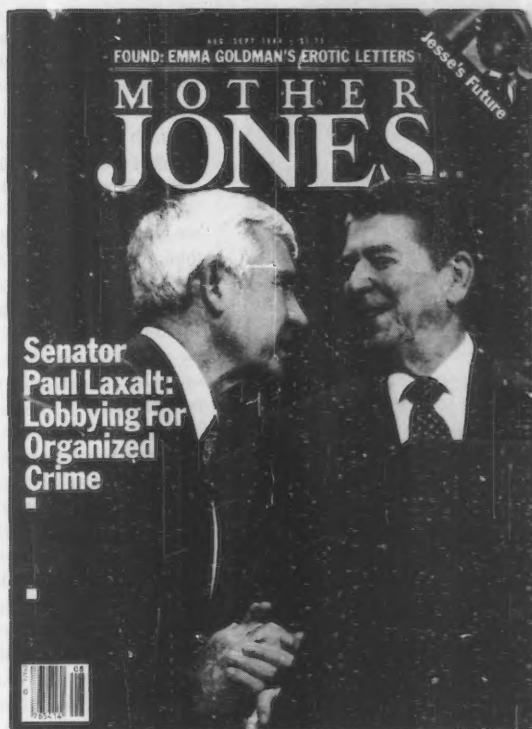
Maybe it was the lawsuit Laxalt's lawyers threatened that killed the story, or maybe it had to do with the fact that ABC executives were lobbying for an important rule change at the Federal Communications Commission. (Paul Laxalt was chairman of the Senate subcommittee that oversees the FCC.)

But one thing is certain; the media will always have lots of reasons *not* to air the kind of news MOTHER JONES prints every issue.

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bution. Consequently, Verba and Orren's own study used two other questions about redistribution, and concluded, as did I, that journalists are unenthusiastic about it (page 108). (Incidentally, my "speculation" about why journalists responded positively to the income-gap statement is based on my extensive research inside four national news organizations. Rothman and the Lichters hired commercial market researchers to do their interviewing for them.)

The letter from Rothman and the Lichters does not explain why they report findings, as in this case, that bear no relation to the survey question. It also does not explain how they can determine people's opinions on the basis of a single survey question, a violation of survey research method so gross that nearly all their findings are invalidated. Rothman and the Lichters claim instead that they only want to measure journalistic liberalism in general, but then why do their articles dwell on answers to individual survey questions? In fact, they do so to justify an invidious comparison of journalists with an imaginary Middle American population that is actually a projection of their own political opinions, supported with data about "the general public" when the public agrees with them.

Rothman and the Lichters build a smoke-screen around my "most serious charge" — namely, that they ignore the question of whether journalists' personal opinions determine news coverage and reportage, and that they also ignore the many studies which answer this question negatively and identify news organizations as the prime determinants. Their approach, "to measure links between perspective and news coverage through attitude surveys, psychological tests, and content analysis," omits the role of news organizations altogether.

I have read their other exercises in content analysis, and must report they also misuse this research method. Thus, I fear that their planned book will consist mainly of invalid data analyzed by biased methods. Barry Sussman, the polling director of The Washington Post, recently described the latest Lichter study as "innuendo, not reliable research."

If Rothman and the Lichters cannot see their political agenda, I worry about their intellectual eyesight, especially Rothman's, for he has written widely about, and has even testified in federal court as an expert witness on, political ideology. I have publicly identified myself as a liberal, but in this article my political agenda was limited to opposing the use of a seemingly scientific analysis to condemn journalists, and to opposing also

the subversion of social science research methods for political aims. Still, that hair-raising quote about scientific method not being the major standard setter for journalism is accurate. However, Rothman and the Lichters misrepresent once more, for I was only arguing that news is not sociology and that news stories cannot be written like research reports.

The UPI turnaround story

TO THE REVIEW:

"UPI's Disaster Story" (CJR, September/October 1985) is flawed by the failure of authors Katharine Seelye and Lawrence Roberts to describe the conflicts of interest of their "sources" at UPI. Seelye's professed interest in these conflicts convinced us to be interviewed, but Seelye and Roberts instead rehashed earlier reports by Gregory Gordon of UPI, and omitted our version. We believe this violates the Review's own statement of purpose, which is to "assess the performance of journalism . . . call attention to its shortcomings and strengths . . . help define standards of honest, responsible service" and "speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

It is UPI's coverage of a complex struggle in March 1985 by managers, union, and lender to seize ownership and control from us which called for an impartial analysis. Unfortunately, the CJR story doesn't explain the roles of various parties at interest, and how UPI's coverage was shaped by them.

The March 7, 1985, agreement states that "The existing . . . owners, the management, and the employees, shall each own an equal portion of the equity." The agreement also states that it would be terminated by "any proceedings under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code." [General manager Luis] Nogales reneged and refused to yield control of UPI, yet Seelye and Roberts neglect to mention this. However, this omission is less important than your authors' decision to quote from a Gregory Gordon UPI story without commenting on its credibility. But they acknowledged to one of us [Ruhe] that they knew that Gordon had sided with the managers. Even Ruhe's charge that Gordon is a partisan is ignored.

CJR's editors should have noted their writers' bias. They have allowed Seelye and Roberts to state the views of their unidentified sources as facts, conclusions, and morals of the story. UPI journalists were their primary sources and we think reporters and editors let their guards down, trusting the veracity of other journalists. Taking so little heed of the state of mind of the Review's



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The Rothman-Lichters response

TO THE REVIEW:

Herbert Gans's critique of our surveys ("Are U.S. Journalists Dangerously Liberal?" *CJR*, November/December 1985) might better be titled "Are Rothman and the Lichters Dangerously Conservative?" Gans starts with an old political trick: present some extreme views and tar your opponent with them. So he cites attacks on the media by Mobil, NCPAC, etc., then asserts that we, too, "seemingly" believe that many journalists "hold socialist attitudes" and "hint" that these liberals should be "replaced" by conservatives.

In the space allotted to us we cannot respond fully to Gans's charges. We will deal briefly with a few salient issues. We never suggested that journalists are "dangerously" liberal or are attempting to tear down American institutions. Nor have we accused journalists of being Marxists, as *CJR*'s cover implies. We do not "admit" that journalists are not socialists. We repeatedly affirm that they "overwhelmingly" reject socialist principles.

Gans states that we have not published our results in scholarly journals. We have and will continue to do so. He also asserts that we have compared journalists only to "conservative" businessmen. Wrong again. In other articles we have compared them to various leadership groups and to the general public. We provided Gans with this information. Despite Gans, the *Los Angeles Times* poll, which he cites, found journalists to be considerably more liberal than other college-educated professionals.

This point typifies Gans's highly selective use of evidence. He cites a single question from the *Los Angeles Times* poll of journalists and the public to show that the two agree. Yet he neglects to mention that the same poll reports an average difference in liberalism of 25 percent between press and public on all questions.

Gans accepts our basic findings that journalists are liberal. He objects instead to our phrasing. For example, he asserts that our data reportage is biased because we say that a "mere" 9 percent of journalists strongly believe that homosexuality is wrong. We

used the term to highlight their divergence from comparison groups who overwhelmingly believe homosexuality is wrong, as we have reported elsewhere.

Similarly, our question on income redistribution is a widely used survey question to which we gave a standard interpretation (see Verba and Orren, *Equality in America*). Gans's speculation about why journalists responded as they did is possible but not likely. Various leadership groups respond differently to this question, and their responses correlate highly with other measures of liberalism to which Gans does not object.

Other charges are merely frivolous. Since we report that journalists agree with some third world criticisms of America's world role, Gans claims we practice "guilt by association." The assumption that all third world criticisms are bad is his. Even when we write that journalists reject Marxist assumptions, he concludes that we "damn with faint praise!"

Gans's most "serious charge is that our surveys are "unscientific" because they do not address news coverage. This remarkable claim would invalidate almost all empirical research in the field, including the *Los Angeles Times* study. Indeed, the major polls would quickly go out of business if they had to provide accompanying measures of behavior in order to be "scientific." Yet our research fits even this unique standard. As Gans knows (but fails to mention), our goal is to measure links between perspective and news coverage through a combination of attitude surveys, psychological tests, and content analyses of news stories. We have already published some material which combines all three elements. However, our book will provide much greater detail — one reason it has taken several years to complete.

No political agenda underlies our research. In our articles we have discussed the theoretical assumptions which do underly it. By contrast, Gans does have a political agenda, and it clearly excludes a willingness to subject his hypotheses to the kind of empirical tests we have used. He has written [in *Deciding What's News*] that "scientific method and social scientific measures of truth can not be . . . the major standard-setters for journalism." He calls for studies on "mo-

nopoly, sexism, and racism" in the media, and maintains that the "wisest news policy is a call for structural reforms to increase democratization in government and the economy."

So a Dart to *CJR* for calling us "unscientific" when you don't publish scientific research and your designated critic really doesn't believe in it. But a Laurel for persistence. We enjoyed your second critique of our work, and we hope that you keep at it until you get it right.

STANLEY ROTHMAN

Smith College
Director, Leadership and Social
Change Project

S. ROBERT LICHTER

George Washington University
Associate Director, Leadership and
Social Change Project

LINDA LICHTER

Co-director, Center for
Media and Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Herbert Gans replies: *My critique of the work of Rothman and the Lichters was careful to focus on their research methods, did not quarrel with their politics, was civil in tone, and eschewed all personal comments. By contrast, their response descends immediately to ad hominem attack, criticizes extraneous detail like cover art, and repeatedly misrepresents my analysis.*

Never a word, however, to explain their bizarre methodological practices or to justify their violations of research ethics. Nor is this their first evasion; indeed, one reason I was moved to write my article was that Rothman failed to deal with the issues raised in the article during a short-lived correspondence last year. Having been misquoted by Rothman and the Lichters, on this point, I repeat: they "have not published any scholarly papers describing their methods" (emphasis added).

Typical of their misrepresentation when criticized is their discussion of the opinion-statement "the government should work to substantially reduce the income gap between the rich and the poor." They continue to call it a question on income redistribution, but Verba and Orren indicate on page 78 of their book, as did I, that it is a statement about good intentions, not about income redistri-

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influence over news or editorial policies of the *Chicago Tribune*.

The editors involved in the inadvertent omission of Commonwealth Edison from our front-page chart do not make their news decisions or their mistakes with any board memberships in mind. Human beings make errors. At the *Chicago Tribune* we correct them and apologize, which we did in this case.

The fact is that Commonwealth Edison's no-tax payment has been a public issue in this city for two years. It was debated on the front pages, including the *Tribune's*, in recent gubernatorial and senatorial races. It is hardly any secret here or anything that conscientious editors of the *Chicago Tribune* would deliberately or carelessly keep from *Tribune* readers. So on behalf of all of them, please take your Dart and stick it in a more appropriate place.

JAMES D. SQUIRES
Editor
Chicago Tribune
Chicago, Ill.

Astray in suburbia

TO THE REVIEW:

Your article on suburban reporting ("Sweating It Out in the Suburbs," *CJR*, September/October 1985) made some good points about the rewards and frustrations of life in the boonies.

It was wrong, however, to suggest that I was the only reporter assigned to cover the Soviet decision to boycott the Los Angeles Olympics. My role was that of one among many. Indeed, the particular story mentioned in the article was written jointly with my colleague Charles P. Wallace.

MATHIS CHAZANOV
Los Angeles Times
Westside Office
Santa Monica, Calif.

The editors reply: *We regret the error and belatedly salute Mr. Chazanov's colleagues.*

Correction

A "Lower case" item in the November/December issue was erroneously attributed to *The Arizona Republic* instead of to the Sun City, Arizona, *Daily News-Sun*. The editors regret the mistake.

Deadline

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the March/April 1986 issue, letters should be received by January 20. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

AWARDS

AMERICAN BANKER FINANCIAL JOURNALISM AWARD. One \$4,500 scholarship and paid summer internship for a graduate journalism or business school student to pursue a career in financial journalism. Deadline is March 14, 1986, for scholarship applications. Contacts: William E. Zimmerman or Joanne M. Bitterman at (212) 943-5714.

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NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING COMPANY SEEKS FREELANCER to write stories about the effects of business on Defense issues. Send resume and 3 clips to: The Times Journal Company, Human Resources Department, Attn: Business Writer, Springfield, VA 22159. EOE.

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Average number copies each issue during preceding 12 months:	
Total number of copies printed	38,616
Paid circulation:	
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	2,714
2. Mail subscriptions	30,321
3. Total paid circulation	33,035
Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means: samples, complimentary, and other free copies	1,340
Total distribution	34,375
Copies not distributed:	
1. Office use, left over, unaccounted for, spoiled after printing	2,388
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Total number of copies printed	38,701
Paid circulation:	
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sale	2,640
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Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means: samples, complimentary, and other free copies	1,250
Total distribution	34,032
Copies not distributed:	
1. Office use, left over, unaccounted for, spoiled after printing	2,509
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Total	38,701

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Susan C. France
Business Manager

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

reporters to determine if "actual malice" was their motive toward us puts the *Review's* editors in the position of having recklessly disregarded the truth.

The result of giving credence to interested sources is a misleading and inaccurate account. Had your authors chosen to report our version, readers would have been able to draw their own conclusions. *CJR's* editors have rejected a detailed 7,500-word, point-by-point corrective article written by us. It is regrettable that *CJR* did not grant equal space to present a defense against the tale told by the *CJR* reporters. This would have better served the *Review's* objective to "speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

Ours is a turnaround story as opposed to the *Review's* "disaster" story. We accepted personal liability for a great news company which had lost money for the previous twenty-three years and which Scripps planned to shut down had we not come forward. UPI was demoralized and losing more than \$1 million a month. Its communications system imposed spiraling costs while its sales had declined over the previous ten years. UPI was not creditworthy so we had to risk all that we owned by signing personally for the working capital and equipment leases necessary to keep the company alive. We launched a turnaround plan based on six objectives: reduce costs, improve editorial quality, rebuild the base business, develop new products with high profit potential, sell non-performing assets to generate cash, and raise equity capital.

A bureaucratic battle ensued when we began to reorganize the company. The managers and the union thwarted change from day one. Though we consulted them on all proposed initiatives, reforms had to be implemented over the opposition of managers and union.

Progress was made in turning the business around despite inadequate capital, internal opposition, and negative press. The new UPI is leaner, its wires are satellite-delivered, and the quality of its reports has improved. The company has survived and proven that it can grow, innovate, and produce profits. Its value has been established and it will soon be sold out of bankruptcy to a well-capitalized company which will move UPI into a new era.

DOUGLAS F. RUHE
WILLIAM E. GEISSLER
United Press International
Nashville, Tenn.

The editors reply: *Journalism has been described as the first draft of history, and certainly this magazine's account is not the last word on the recent turmoil at UPI. It is impossible to conceive of any account — even*

one written years after the event — that would please all those involved in the fierce struggle for control of the agency.

But we must reject the accusation that the writers of our story were motivated by malice toward the new owners of UPI. Seelye and Roberts are seasoned professional journalists, accustomed to weighing conflicting versions of events. They worked on the UPI story for months, interviewing some thirty-five people and reading through many pounds of documents. We, who worked closely with them, saw no sign of hidden agenda and heard no sounds suggestive of ax-grinding. Obviously, Ruhe and Geissler's interpretation of events differed from the interpretations offered by other parties to the dispute over how UPI should be managed — and from the interpretation eventually arrived at by Seelye and Roberts. Furthermore, Ruhe and Geissler's version of events was by no means overlooked. Ruhe, for example, is quoted as saying: 'We turned the company around . . . It was losing a million and a half dollars a month; it's now cash-positive.'

We took great pains to help the writers produce a fair and accurate story. We thought — and think — that they were successful.

Katharine Seelye and Lawrence Roberts reply: Greg Gordon was not a "source" for our story nor was it our aim to assess his coverage of UPI's recent history. We did quote two sentences from one of his stories because that story went to the heart of criticism against Ruhe and Geissler and had gone out on the national wire. But we included the fact that Ruhe had denied the charges to Gordon and had again denied them to us, insisting "vehemently," we wrote, that he had done nothing illegal or unethical.

A dart declined

TO THE REVIEW:

As a long-time fan of "Darts and Laurels," I usually accept either without comment. However, your Dart to the *Chicago Tribune* in the November/December issue is an unwarranted insult to the integrity of the *Tribune's* staff.

The implication of the Dart is that the failure to include Commonwealth Edison in a list of major firms that paid no income tax in 1984 is somehow related to the fact that the chairman of Commonwealth Edison sits on the board of the Tribune Company, parent of the *Chicago Tribune*. There are a number of important executives on the Tribune Company board. None of them has one iota of

It happens almost every day. Somewhere in the United States a news story breaks, and within minutes a familiar pattern of local and national television coverage is rapidly set in motion.

A recent example:

August 2, 1985, 6:00 p.m.: Delta Airlines Flight 191 from Fort Lauderdale crashes at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. A news team from WFAA-TV Channel 8, the ABC affiliate in Dallas, is the first on the scene.

By 6:30 p.m., WFAA-TV begins live coverage from the airport and continues throughout the evening. The WFAA-TV footage is fed by satellite to ABC News headquarters in New York. The ABC Television Network breaks into its regular programming with live bulletins from Dallas. Another story had already been chosen for that night's edition of "ABC News Nightline." But host Ted Koppel and the show's producer quickly switch to the Dallas story. Within hours, "Nightline" airs a full report, including a live interview with WFAA-TV's reporter on the scene.

The networks have their own bureaus in major cities and overseas. They can dispatch correspondents, cameramen, technicians, and equipment rapidly to the site of a breaking news story, almost anywhere in the world. Once there, they bring live pictures and reports instantaneously to American viewers via satellite—whether it be the hijacking of an Italian cruise ship in the Mediterranean, the Mexico City earth-

quake, or the hostage crisis in Beirut.

But for domestic coverage, the best allies the network news departments have are their affiliated stations. ABC, for example, has the benefit of 214 "unofficial news bureaus" in addition to our own—the news departments of our affiliated stations. We provide affiliates with a daily program service, including national and international news coverage. They share their local news coverage with us for inclusion in the national service when that is warranted. Scarcely

a day passes without footage from one or more affiliates appearing on "World News Tonight."

It is an effective relationship, one of the reasons that television has become the major source of news and information for most Americans and, opinion surveys show,

the most trusted. It is one of the reasons Americans are the best-informed people in the world.

**American Television
and You**



AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANIES INC.,
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AS THE NATION WATCHES

The Lower case

ACID RAIN LINKED TO U.S. EMISSIONS BY REAGAN'S AIDE

The New York Times 9/14/85

City's First Mayor To Be Born in Cuba

The Washington Post 11/13/85

New Quebec premier follows dad's footsteps

Rochester, N.Y., Times-Union 10/4/85

Sheriff Told to Replace Wife

Tulsa World 11/13/85

Chef throws his heart into helping feed needy

Louisville Courier-Journal 11/22/85



Science textbooks to emphasize revolution

Gallup, N.M., Independent 9/19/85

Mrs. Clinton Praises Poor Legal Services

Harrison (Ark.) Daily Times 10/18/85

Kontakis is found guilty of murdering wife after brief deliberation

Somerset (N.J.) Spectator 10/17/85

Something went wrong in jet crash, expert says

Winnipeg Free Press 9/20/85

The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has been underway for six months, but few show interest in it. (AP Laserphoto)

Newburgh, N.Y., Evening News 10/29/85

Church Retains Homosexual Bar

The New York Times 9/14/85

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We've always had a soft spot in our heart for visionaries.

100 years ago, these visionaries rocked, shocked and scandalized Paris.

They were branded as "Impressionists"—and museums refused to display their work.

Now, for the first time in this century, you can see many of the paintings that caused all the fuss. In an extraordinary exhibition based upon the 8 original shows organized by the Impressionists themselves.

AT&T is honored to bring you *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (January 17-April 6) and at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (April 19-July 6).

This show is truly a celebration of vision—a new vision that changed forever the way we look at the world.

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Woman with a Parasol—Madame Monet and Her Son, Claude Monet.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.



